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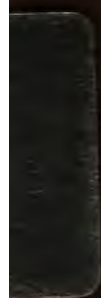
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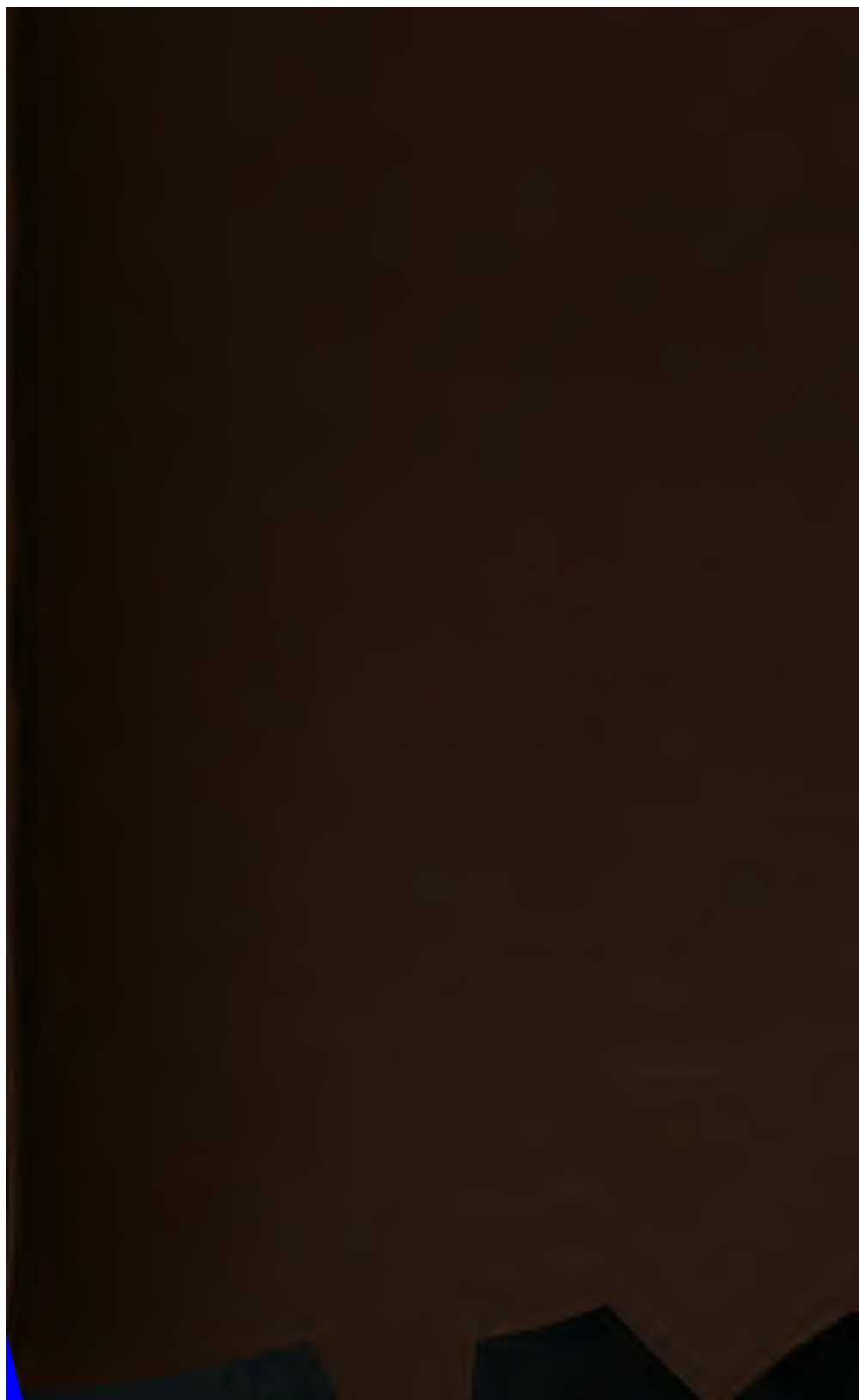
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ROSA.

BY
AGNES ROLLO WILKIE.







ROSA.

EXTRACT OF CRITICISM

RECEIVED FROM

THE LATE REV. GEO. GILFILLAN, DUNDEE.

DEAR MRS. WILKIE,

I HAVE had great pleasure in reading the MSS. submitted for my criticism. ROSA I consider a work of no ordinary kind. Its mental and religious tone is pre-eminently high. ROSA, the centre figure, is a sublime character, worthy of all admiration. The dialogues and descriptions are striking, suggestive, and glowing in enthusiasm and flashes of inspiration. If I do not agree with all your speculative opinions, I admire the tone and aim of the book, and especially its fearless honesty and intense earnestness. I doubt not but the work as a whole will recommend itself to a class of readers to whom the ordinary novel is not acceptable. Such works as ROSA I consider one of the desiderata of the times, and heartily wish you all success in your literary work.

Ever yours truly,

(Signed) G. GILFILLAN.

ROSA.

BY

MRS. AGNES ROLLO WILKIE.



LONDON:

W. STEWART & CO., THE HOLBORN VIADUCT STEPS, E.C.

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1882.

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DEDICATED

TO

Thomas Carlyle, Esq.,

CHELSEA.

HONOURED AND VERY DEAR SIR,—

To me it is indeed gratifying having received permission to dedicate *ROSA* to you, which I herewith do in grateful and loving veneration of your rare genius, arousing inspiration, divine glorification of the dignity and redemptive power of all honest work,—of your sublime earnestness, and unswerving fidelity to conscience, truth, and righteousness, and heroic endurance of manifold obstructions and final giant victory.

The truth is, your influence as a great moral teacher in great measure tended to create within me the desire to write a tale in some degree representing your suggestive idea, viz. 'That the only real romance is real life, and real life the only romance worth recording.'

To you, exalted sir, I offer no apology for my want of belief in and conformity to popular opinion, simply because I believe you consider that the main aim of all literature should be to endeavour to establish the majesty and immortality of the soul; to exalt and honour the true and beautiful in the mind; and, if possible, to liberalize and spiritualize the human conscience. Therefore, for all your valuable counsels I tender best thanks, and trust you will believe I have great pleasure and pride in thus briefly recording these sentiments of reverence and admiration, which will ever be entertained by me for your noble life-work.

AGNES ROLLO WILKIE.

December 1876.



PREFACE.

IN most cases prefaces are either too apologetic or explanatory ; and were it not that I intend supplementing ROSA with another tale, I would allow my dedication, in this case, to be my sole introduction. Therefore, while ROSA as a tale is complete, the leading ideas and aim are incomplete, and can only be fairly judged when more fully developed. From the dedication it will be seen that, although just now put in print, ROSA was finished some years ago. The reader will therefore believe it is peculiarly painful to me that my two best friends and advisers, Thomas Carlyle and the Rev. G. Gilfillan, have both been called to their reward. The immortal thought and feeling, however, of these great men are public wealth, so general and highly appreciated that I have only to mention their names to hear the vibrations of universal sorrow and admiration. If lost to sight, in the highest sense they are still with us in their arousing thought, divine inspiration, beneficent sympathy, and ennobling example ; and my tribute of sacred sorrow is far too hallowed for words.



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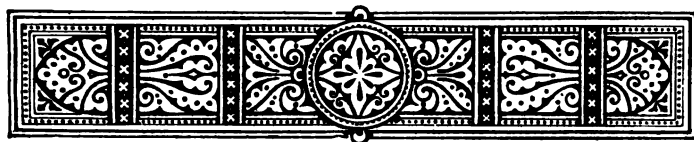
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ROSA.

CHAPTER I.

ROSA AND HER AUNT.

IN a large dining-room in a mansion-like house in the suburbs of the rather unromantic town of W——, in Lancashire, two ladies were enjoying a savoury luncheon and a rambling chit-chat on various subjects, social, civic, and religious. One was young and exceedingly prepossessing in appearance and manner, and the other, half a lustre over fourscore, was hale and hearty, and highly interesting. As the phrase goes, she was old and full of years. Nevertheless, her mental vigour was undiminished, and her flow of beautiful feeling more ardent and sensitive than the fiery impulses of youth. If the carnation pink of early youth was for ever fled, the higher beauty of mind and soul shone through the time-worn countenance, and she was bearing fruit in old age, and giving, on this side the grave, an earnest of the immortality of that mystic inner power called soul. Her shrewd originality, and unbending fidelity to opinions and principles she esteemed absolute in power and unchanging in manifestation, and her peculiarity of manner, intensely social, yet often appearing stiff and reserved, and her imposing air of imperial dignity, blended with haloings of youthful vivacity and humour, lent her characterizing qualities which raised her infinitely above the ordinary old lady, generally more tolerated than esteemed. Our dear old lady, however, believed age, as well as youth and mid-life, has its duties and work; and up to the time we introduce her to the reader, Mrs. Aslawn, the ex-mayorress of W——, had never for a day felt old in mind, discontented in spirit, wearied in heart, or faint in soul. Sometimes as she dwelt on the freaks, strange fancies, false ideas, and beautiful freshness, and dreamy, yearning sensibility of mere girlhood, one felt she was more youthful than youth, and that her over-soul seemed realizing with rapturous pleasure the full significance of its inherent immortality amid the decay of its mortal vestment. She, too, seemed to share in our opinion; and the realized glory of never-ending life lent her strength to run and not weary, and to move onward and upward with-

out feeling faint. Every morning life was to her new and beautiful as the dawning of love's rapture, and the throb of every child's heart awoke a tender response in her matured sympathy; and in every noble youth, and coy, smiling maiden, she found a new divine poem, natural, yet intensely supernatural, all gilt through and through with the unspoken and ever inexpressible language of quivering love and pious wonderment.

Youth, therefore, even more than matured experience, found her a fertile source of rare enjoyment, wholesome instruction, and stimulating sympathy. Her strongest love and reverence, however, as well as her pride and prejudice, centred in and entwined the past; and the present-day spirit of unrest, searching inquiry, and critical analysis of Bible, creed, and church authority; she regarded as the accursed spirit of antichrist let loose to try the faith and patience of the elect. Notwithstanding her tenacious clinging to the past and perishing, and credulous faith in the infallibility of the very letter of Scripture and all the dogmas of orthodox theology, she was, to a great extent, influenced by the present spirit of more enlightened Liberalism, and might justly be regarded as a representative of two eras of thought or stages of human progress. In her early youth, nay, until mid-time of her days, adoption, justification, and sanctification were considered infallible credentials of eternal life, and especially the imparted grace of the elect, sealed by the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. To many these were vague-sounding terms, but the holy priesthood knew too well the worth of vague mysticism for seeking to dispel the darkness of the people. The foundation of the church's infallibility rested on sounding vagueism, and to doubt was to be damned. It was neither by works nor by faith, but by electing grace; and our august lady shuddered with pious horror at the present spirit of free inquiry, bold denial, and searching analysis. Nevertheless, as she advanced in years, the inflowing tide of mental and spiritual enlightenment somewhat modified her opinions and prejudices. In spite of the encrusting of superstition, her superior natural powers could not be completely crushed into the dry shell of crude tradition—creed, confessional, and conventional observance of rites and ceremonies. Sometimes it all seemed a strange compound of error and superstition, and in the course of holy meditation she realized that some very near and very holy spirit of inspiration bloweth where it listeth; and that whatever the name or outward form, true religion is love and righteousness. Often, when thus feeling, she trembled with a sort of weird awe. To one brought up as she had been, it seemed indefinitely mysterious to be drifting away from the hoary moorings of finite limitations into the infinite ocean of divine reality.

Tossing on her bed, she would whisper: 'Surely after all I am merging into dotage or mental imbecility. In this solemn hush of midnight, when the busy wheels of industry are at rest, my soul and spirit seems to shake off the covering of flesh, and soar into a mysterious region of thought. What can it mean? Am I not saved in that I have accepted Christ, and regularly partaken of His sacraments? Yet some new god, or mad delusion, is possessing me; some life I cannot understand is stealing over my inner being, and shedding all with light and beauty. Over the weltering chaos of the non-elect, and the black barbarian

brood of uncivilized races, some infinitely beneficent Being is bending, and I am beginning to feel the whole family in heaven and earth are one.'

Mrs. Aslawn was, however, careful to hide these strange emotions of thought and feeling. One thing, she was not exactly sure from whence they sprang; and in word and deed, and daily conformity to fast days, and every part and observance of church ordinance, she was even more strictly correct. Her solitary visions and intuitive realizations she characterized as mere vain, human imaginings, and, it might be, delusions of the evil one,—his old temptation of forbidden knowledge.

On the evening prior to her introduction to the reader, her struggling spirit had been once more a thief and robber, climbing to God and heaven by a newer and more holy way than that of rites and ceremonies. Like St. Paul, she hardly knew whether she was in the body or out of it. One thing, she was in a heaven or paradise where a holy God-Father was loved and worshipped by all races and tribes of men. In all His worlds she could not find an eternal hell, nor any God-pronounced curses; and she saw atheists and murderers, Christ and Judas, St. Paul and Voltaire, all enjoying happy, endless progression in the mystery of life. It seemed strange, but the beautiful sight made her weep tears of joy—tears which are only shed in heaven, and tears which are for ever wiped away by abiding joy. In the morning, however, the 'Thus said the Lord' of the church did not harmonize with her midnight raving, and she concluded she had eaten something which had deranged her digestive organs. At luncheon yet once again the mystic vision stood before her, and unawares she made some remarks which rather surprised her niece.

'Aunt, dear, these are rather startling speculations for a stiff Tory,' the young lady remarked. 'To-day we are evidently taking a wide range in our luncheon *tête-à-tête*. The truth is, I believe we are the only two women in England who never weary inquiring into the wonders of nature, and especially concerning the future destinies of the various races. To our own minds at least, we bring light out of darkness on most subjects, and every new day finds us more impatient to resume the unbroken search after truer knowledge.'

For a time the young lady appeared to be lost in self-examination, evidently asking to what and where the all of life is tending. She might not know it, nevertheless she was a great, God-inspired prophetess, with a loving message in her burdened bosom. Hitherto she had simply been bearing, as genius ever does, severe discipline, or, it might be, now and then indicating her growing want of sympathy with many popular beliefs and forms of social inequality and too partial political government.

'Why, Rosa dear, are you criticizing your own remarks, and finding in them little save a string of words with neither text nor context?' the old lady inquired. 'It is one thing to talk, and another to speak common sense. You sometimes express yourself rather freely; nevertheless I often see a sad shade on your forehead when you seem most cheerful, and am inclined to think your expressions of happiness are mere misleading words hiding the festering wounds of an aching heart.'

Is it true, child, that you are completely happy in your iron cage, listening to my continual opposition to your increasing sympathy with Radical freethought? Do not look so astonished, or I shall fancy I have discovered an unpleasant secret. For years I have marked your tendencies, and watched your gradual departure from the faith once delivered to the saints. Now you seem so saturated with the subtle poison of your age that I am every week expecting you to join the rabble herd of social and political revolutionists who clamour for the levelling of all inequality. However, I sometimes wish I could let you alone to dream your own dreams. With me, however, duty is religious action; and when I remember you are not only my niece, but adopted child, the love of God constrains me to oppose your every idea and argument. If, therefore, my want of sympathy with your darling hobbies renders your heart cold and barren, I trust you will believe I only condemn your ideas and beliefs because I wish you to be prudent, modest, decent, and dignified, as becomes a daughter of a British nobleman. It may be all very well for the vulgar and low-born to clamour and rave for the levelling of all distinctions, but you belong to an ancient family, and should ever, in all circumstances, remember *noblesse oblige*.'

'My maxim of honour, aunt, will ever be progress, reform, retrenchment, and my creed justice and mercy,' the young lady replied. 'I do not know why you should imagine I am unhappy. However, I do not know what I may be in the future, but up to this time my home has been a place of sweet rest. I do not object to your repudiation of all my opinions and beliefs, simply because we are both, by different means it may be, endeavouring to spell out a few divine truths out of much error and ignorance; and, it may be, both have much to forsake before we find the *pearl of great price*. If sliding along with popular opinion, fashion, and conventionalism render one decent, prudent, and lady-like, I fear all my life I will be an indecent, imprudent, unlady-like creature. I like your opposition because it all the more clearly reveals the narrow, time-serving spirit of all I understand by Toryism. Nevertheless, your love and reverence for the passing and the perishing does not in the least take from my love and reverence for you. The seclusion of your society is dearer to me than aught beside, and my home is indeed a sweet home. The truth is, I am so completely happy with you that I really wish you would allow me to refuse all these unwelcome invitations which of late have come too often, calling me away from more true and sacred duties. Every day I am more and more feeling a real dislike to balls and parties. To me it appears that the gossiping is highly immoral, and the unprincipled scheming in husband-hunting, which is the main idea and intention for the outlay of these extravagant scenes of gluttony, is to my mind more baneful to the moral and intellectual life of the family and the nation than are more open cesspools of pronounced evil. The former is saturating the very heart of society with a subtle and dangerous form of selfishness, whereas the latter are open, visible evils, directing the attention of all social reformers.'

'Stop, Rosa; no rambling so far ahead of my direct question,' her aunt remarked. 'At present I don't intend discussing the evils and

immoral tendencies of fashionable debauch. God knows it is not, from a rational standpoint, a noble sight to see creatures endowed with reason and reflection making a god of their belly, and bargaining for one another as one sells a bit of material property. However, I am glad you are happy; but you must remember I don't wish you merely to tolerate my opposition to your opinions. My special work is to strive for your reconversion.'

'I do not exactly know what you wish me converted to,' Rosa replied. 'You believe in a book, and in certain mere human authorized forms and beliefs concerning God's mind and will; while I, on the contrary, refuse to believe these the full mind or will of God, and feel He has a real, living word to every age and every listening child. To me the Divine Father is as actual an inspiring presence as He was to any ancient Hebrew bard or prophet. If I derive my religious life and inspiration from direct communion with the Divine Spirit, it seems strange, not to say presumptive, to seek to draw me away from the great Fountain Head, so that I may drink at some little pool all encrusted over with the prejudices, superstitions, and conceits of hundreds of generations of men all subject to the infirmities of evil. The only man who is said to have had no sin, left us no written word of life, and I think that is in itself sufficient to prove that God has a diviner mode of communication with His children. However, if we cannot see eye to eye on these and other subjects, we are happy in our social relations. To me it appears that freethought has its advantage over all established opinions, and that no man or woman knows anything of the real beauty and meaning of life, until each has in some measure thought out its problems for themselves. Orthodoxy is sad, long-faced, and funereal, but freethought finds Eden in every happy homestead. When I believed in an electing God and an everlasting hell, I hated life and all conditions. Now life is to me one continual beat of increasing blessedness. When I am sad, it is because of the wretchedness of those who are yet wallowing in poverty, with all its appalling evils. Now the idea of dressing for the Haddington party is depressing me like a horrid nightmare.'

'Rosa, what do you mean? I am truly shocked,' her aunt remarked.

'Dear aunt, don't look so horrified, and I will tell you all in a few words,' the vivacious young lady continued. 'Just for once let me have out my say, or silence will consume me. The short and the long of the whole matter is, I am entirely out of place in this soulless, conventional age. I don't know what others think, but the more I see and experience, I find society all overrun with what I call, for want of a better word, snobbism and sneaking, artful selfishness. We are certainly social creatures, and should seek fellowship one with another in a pure, innocent manner. But few seem to me sincere; and the silly frivolity and sinful extravagance of what is called fashionable life is to my mind simply disgusting degradation. However, were all able to some extent to revel in such finery of dress, and if gluttony was essential for the good of the body, then it might be a good and no evil. As it is, this keeping up of false appearances, and great outlay for one evening, to be followed by months of ill-tempered

stinting of servants, not to speak of tradesmen's bills uncashed, is horrid mockery and mere farceism. If such humbug makes one genteel, it is time we had a more correct meaning to the word. The idea may shock you, but I often wish I had been born a gipsy maid, so that I might have enjoyed a like freedom of limb and brain. "O liberty, I love you!" sang some poet, whose name I forget, as he, lark-like, chanted in the vast space of divine goodness. Of course, from this time you will consider me incapable of appreciating your splendid social position, or of honouring your patrician descent. However, I am of age, and claim the liberty of my own opinions; and will only add, that I will never barter my right to think and act independently, neither will I soil the throne of conscience for any place or position.'

'I always thought there was a bit of the dramatic coiled up in your gipsy-like composition,' the old lady said, with a sort of ironical smile. 'Now you are taking the liberty to have out your say, I will also have mine; and it may sober you to know, that in sight of most you are a vainglorious, hot-headed enthusiast, fancying you have a particular work to do. However, like the Darwin and other evolution and spontaneous generation theories, your delusions are all devil-begotten temptations to eat of the forbidden fruit. All my life I have entertained a real contempt for women who depart from the ordinary and established rules and customs of society, and by intruding into novel professions, seek to stir up the uneducated to clamour for unwise legislation. St. Paul says he will not suffer a woman to teach, and I abide by Holy Scripture. The truth is, the bare idea of a lady of your age and experience to be turning up an offended, critical nose at society, is altogether out of the question.'

'That, like every other thing, is simply a matter of opinion,' Rosa said. 'If society was correct in its morals and manners, and the orthodox standard of political and theological excellence the truth and life of wisdom and goodness, we poor deluded Radicals would simply be left alone with our fanatical delusions. But it is otherwise, as the force of opposition proves. If Toryism has nothing to lose, and Radicalism nothing to gain, believe me, aunt, patrician Conservatism and royal aggression would not condescend to note our existence. Like the ants, however, we are a small people, but exceedingly strong, and no amount of opposition discourages us. One thing, our nests are not built on tradition or entail inheritance, but on righteousness and honesty; and it is because we have truth and justice on our side that you wish to stamp us out. That is the only way you can, to a degree, succeed, and you put forth the all of your remaining force to shut men and women out of Parliament and the press who have most power with the people. It is a dangerous game; but even by this, your last stronghold, your principles prove they are shifting sand, and your every move of obstruction reveals the hidden iniquity of your system. St. Paul was certainly a great man, and all very well in his own day; but then, you must remember, the world was supposed square and steadfast, whereas now it is round and moving, and with the motion has escaped away from a good deal of the unsoundness of the subtle sayings of the eloquent, zealous apostle.'

It may be out of the question, nevertheless I claim a right to criticize society, just as it claims a right to criticize me. The more I criticize and reflect, the more am I convinced that the waste of time, and especially the waste of money, in providing these extravagant scenes, are far more sinful and barbarous than the heathenism at home and abroad we so much deplore. Spiritual teachers, both in the pulpit and in literature, seem, as a rule, afraid to denounce these social sins for fear of offending the well-to-do classes. I am not one who supposes, for a moment, people do wrong merely to spread evil and ruin; on the contrary, the evils which are most injurious to individual and national life are sources of a kind of enjoyment. The lustful man has his moments of thrilling pleasure, flattery and flunkeyism are sweet to the vain, and the attention and bland smile of popular applause mantle the brow with the pride of conquest; and under the giddy influence of strong drink, men and women forget the sterner responsibilities of correct living. In all paths of life, I believe, it is happiness most keep in view. However, true happiness springs out of placid harmony with goodness; and goodness knoweth nothing of excess, and needs no mountebank merriment to feed its sources of indwelling joy. However, if I am critical, aunt, I am neither a misanthrope nor a cynic, but simply a hopeful sister of humanity, wishing to unite my strength with the weak, to share my wealth with the poor, to heal the sick with my health, and enlighten the benighted with my inspiration. The wealthy, the educated, and the high-born are the privileged classes, therefore these do not require me; and if I allow them to go on with their devil-dance of farce-playing and mask-wearing, surely I may be allowed to act the city missionary, and report my experiences.

'I confess your remarks do not altogether surprise me,' her aunt said. 'It is not given you to hide your inner complexion of thought and feeling. For some years I have seen you forsaking the good old paths, and drifting into the bubbling anarchy of democracy. With the quick, sensitive perceptions of a true, tender mother, I have seen your cheeks grow hollow, your eyes sad and pensive, and your soul troubled within you; and I have wept as I watched you battling with ideas and things too mysterious and misty for finite understanding. Likewise in your everyday actions I have marked your contempt of what the masses regard as the very cream of existence. Now it is evident you are wishing to cast aside all disguise, and desire me to understand you are going to absent yourself from the Haddington party. Like all, however, who pretend to a morality they cannot practise, you are weak and cowardly when confronted with temptation. Why did you not refuse Sir David to his face the last time he was here? I suppose his flattery about your conversational powers was too much for your vanity. Such is life all over. The truth is, you Radicals are, above all, a set of mere pretenders, hunting for notoriety by every out-of-the-way means. Therefore, my dear Rosa, when you had not the womanliness to refuse Sir David's invitation, and tell him to his face to give, at least, your dish to the poor, I hold you duty bound to fulfil your engagement. And when you are there, do let them know that you simply patronize

such gatherings as a moral and mental detective, studying the weaknesses of the various farce-players for a sort of intellectual exercise. I am sure, once you get over the trouble of dressing and the botheration of new introductions, you will have rare sport. Sailing along in grand isolation, or sitting on some lofty peak, you will feel like some supreme goddess in midst of a moving mass of tinsel buffoonery and prancing vanity. Such being the case, be honest, and admit a party a pleasant change from constant companionship with dusty volumes of moral philosophy and metaphysical theories, and a prejudiced old aunt, done with all but pride in the past and solemn preparation for the future.'

Rosa did not reply, but sat gazing like one in a dream, and her aunt continued:

'Rosa, I think I never knew or read of a more romantic creature than you are developing into. At your age I was all blood and fun, and the bare idea of a splendid ball turned my head for weeks. We of fifty years ago did enjoy ourselves, and I often experience, even to this day, a thrill of real enjoyment reviewing these happy times. The young men and maidens in my day enjoyed themselves with downright natural gleefulness. Now-a-days youth has lost all the resounding mirth which opens the heart as well as expands the lungs. Now we have no laughing, dancing boys and girls, few generous, manly young men; and the generality of our young ladies are something too artificial for my unvarnished criticism. Altogether, I feel a solitary creature in this untoward, steam-power generation. Those of my companions who are left are either complete dotards or peevish, discontented sinners—mere existing corpses, having neither reverence for the past nor interest in the present, and are entirely incapable of rational preparation for the future.'

'Aunt, we are evidently both odd beings,' Rosa said, gazing on her aunt with amused admiration. 'You sum me up severely, but I am used with your unmerciful sarcasm. However, your years and experience lend you wisdom and authority to which I must bow. To me you are ever the ideal representative of a noble past, whose virtue and heroic goodness has thrust us thus far forward into a higher degree of mental and moral advancement. You are equally hard on our young men and maidens; but were all parents like you in counsel and example, youths of both sexes would be more manly and womanly, as well as more earnest and sympathetic. Philosophize and criticize as we may, we cannot reasonably expect the branch to be different from the tree. Children are generally such as they are made. To a great extent, according to the example and training so is the child. I grant, in regard to these unfortunate children, that society does wear off a deal of clumsy ignorance and inherited prejudice, but in exchange it generally creates and fosters as many bad habits and debasing vices. Home training will, therefore, ever remain the leading influence of the present as well as the hope for the future; and before home influence and education can be healthy and redeeming, women generally must be more enlightened and better educated—in fact, completely emancipated from her present state of unjust subjection. I believe we will

always have enough and to spare of schools and college cramming, which after all is but very shallow refinement. Schools and colleges will never give a strong backbone of moral soundness. Greece and Rome of the past give a fearful evidence of mere intellectual refinement and enthusiasm for the perfection of mere physicalism. Thus it appears to me it is to home influence society will ever owe its deepest debt of gratitude or blackest curse.'

'Rosa, you would find philosophy in a snuff-box, and a moral as earnest as Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted* in a passing remark on the nature of the weather,' Mrs. Aslawn replied. 'You are a sort of puzzle to me. However, we are forgetting time is passing. Don't you think it is time you were looking over your wardrobe for the evening?'

'You know the saying, "A bonny bride, etc.,"' Rosa remarked. 'I suppose we are all more or less the creatures of circumstances. If I must descend from common sense to ball dress, I think I will begin a new discussion on why it is man is such a dressing animal. Putting all joking aside, it is a dreadful thing to begin dressing for a fashionable ball. With women especially; every one seems got up with a view to a sale, a sensation, or a show; and I think, to complete the business, we should be severally marked with prize numbers. Only think of the comfort this extravagant outlay would bring to families sunk in poverty, who are weltering in the agony of moral and physical suicide! This senseless vieing in excesses of eating, drinking, and dressing might be excusable where all are comfortable, and where pauperism and poverty are unknown. Even as a Radical reformer, I would not object to extravagance and luxury if there were no uneducated waifs; no heart-broken virtue and unrecognised heroism sitting in hunger and rags; no unprotected widows and ill-clad, half-fed orphans; and no struggling poets, artists, and reformers left to be trampled under foot by selfish indifference. If I mistake not, to-night we will be degraded beneath the lower animals. Instead of eating for necessity and the healthful continuation of life, we will cram down ten or twelve dishes of disease, and afterwards deluge the overloaded system with wine, tea, coffee, and goodness knows all. How our overcharged vessels must struggle and pant to break up such a heterogeneous hash of superfluous aliment! Seeing we well-to-do people consume such an unnecessary quantity, what answer will we give to the Author of life should He give us an audience and inquire concerning the pale-faced semi-starvation grinning in the back lanes and over-populated closes of all large cities? Think of it as we may, wanton waste, and selfish extravagance, and neglected poverty are but sorry offerings for the most Christian as well as the greatest nation to present to favouring Heaven. Another thing, party conversation is so silly and trifling. Think of a leg of mutton and a painting of one of our first artists being both called nice, and a currant pudding and one of Mendelssohn's grandest pieces being alike sweet, and a good book and fashionable girl termed awfully jolly! This want of consistent distinction and intelligent appreciation, and destitution of sympathetic earnestness, makes one mad; and our high priests in literature are only known to a mere handful of men and women. Will things always remain as now? In dress, however, there is a little more

originality, but it is neither beautiful nor comfortable. 'The truth is, I am inclined to think it was at some of our fashionable parties Darwin conceived his monkey theory of mankind.'

'If I would listen, Rosa, you would go on talking till doomsday,' her aunt remarked. 'If imagination be our most God-like faculty, you certainly are richly endowed; only you seem to degrade it by some rather startling conceptions. However, that of Darwin is one of your most rational. Dress has gone to such a disgusting excess, that monkeys are more beautiful and rational than what is termed a leader or follower of fashion. Seeing, however, that you are such a burning and shining light, you should present yourself at as many parties as possible, and by a superior example preach and teach your gospel of common sense. In some ways be as great as your beliefs. Only in so far as we live our religion and ideal of social equity, will we be real influences for good. Like our Lord, you should grace all feasting, and by spiritualizing all social ceremonies and conversation, convert the water into wine, and make eating and drinking one of the fine arts. Why be so offended because a pudding or a leg of mutton are admired with equal enthusiasm with a fine picture or a sublime piece of music? Only think for a moment of the sublimity of art necessary to germinate and mature one ear of corn or one blade of grass, not to speak of the infinitude of mystery coiled up in the organized life of a sheep. In all God's worlds, Rosa, there is nothing common or unclean, nothing mean or small, and all art and music cannot create anything approaching to the beauty and mystery of the rational life of those creatures we so ruthlessly murder to feed on their flesh. My dear child, you of the scientific and critical school need sadly to be reminded that you are as snobbish and artificial, and as full of intelligent distinction, as the class you condemn. All over we are running too much for the *goody-goody* of what we fancy the most beautiful and sublime. The truth is, few, either Radical or Tory, artist, socialist, or scientist, are beating in sympathy with the great inner soul of love, pity, and beneficence pulsating in the very heart of all nature. In the dead valley of vivisection, in the muddy mire of protoplasm, science is seeking the living among the dead, and the revolting cruelties of the chamber of horrors are deadening and demoralizing the finest feeling and faculties of the human mind.'

'You are right, aunt, and I thank you very much,' Rosa frankly admitted. 'How easily one can be carried away with a one-sided idea, especially if the said idea has a learned or classic-like appearance! In all matters it is very easy taking a bird's-eye glance, but the great soul and mysterious origin of all we know by nature are deeps of unsounded wisdom. Nevertheless science is ever more and more penetrating into hidden lore, and much we are at present ignorant of will be known and utilized in days to come. However, it may be some of the more spiritual principles will for ever elude the analysis of all research. Looked at from the painter's standpoint, the ear of corn or the simple sheep are small, common things compared to a perfect work of art. The corn and sheep, however, are only common and inartistic because we have familiarized them with our grosser appetites. Notwithstanding the origin and intact individuality alike of the corn and

the sheep, these are more wondrously sublime than all mere human art. Thus when you come with your divine wonder of conscious life and first-cause power, we are thrown, despite all our conventionalism, into a vast laboratory of germ creation and sex distinction into which neither science nor art has yet penetrated. As you say, vivisection of cereal, cerebellum, or vascular can never give any idea of the divine origin of life, which can only be part realized by the intuitions of reciprocal sympathy. After all, what is the grandest endeavour of art but a copy of that which is revealed in the ever-changing beauty of nature?

'We have ever been at one in regard to art in its too pretentious claims to be regarded as greater than nature,' Mrs. Aslawn remarked. 'And in regard to science, not a few of its conceits and monster assertions must go to the wall. The true science, however, of reverent aspiration after the truth and wisdom of nature, will ever remain a celestial lamp lighting the way to all excellence. The main difference between us seems to be that you carry all your theories and ideas into too transcendent heights. If you would succeed, you must tell the people how they can make most money regardless of how the object is gained. Therefore I fear, like some of our scientific theories, your ideas of life will likewise go to the wall. Life is indeed a bewildering mystery, and every age will have its characteristic expressions of evil and error until the second coming of the Lord. It is my opinion society is simply going from bad to worse. Now-a-days atheism and profanity are almost considered evidences of superior greatness, and the sublime faculties of wonder and reverence are nowhere in the creed of the *survival of the fittest*. We are fast getting into steam and electricity, and the seasons are so changed we have only one summer in seven. However, I do not wonder, seeing our chief business is to extract every ray of electricity and gas, and bottle these up for our manias of defying distance. The truth is, I would not be astonished to wake up some fine morning and discover we are just smashing into a more magnetic planet. Suppose one single pair survived the shock, and found themselves the only living creatures in a *brand-new world*, overstrewn by a little surface dust, the only remains of this planet we call Earth. Of course the idea is the perfection of absurdity, but supposing such a thing, what sort of Genesis would that strange pair put in as the beginning of their holy bible? Of course they would give a detail of the beginning, and their song of gratitude for having survived all living things would establish a more orthodox creed than the Westminster Confession. If angels appeared to them, I wonder what would be the nature of the new temptation?'

'Aunt, you make me tremble,' Rosa replied. 'Not, however, at the possibility of such an end, but because the idea seems to suppose a godless world, for such a result could only be the consequence of blind chance. You denounce my freethinking, but you beat me now. If I hold you where you are, earth and all its wonderful manifestations and resources are relics or ruins of a more ancient planet of bubbling mystery. The more we reflect and analyze, we will find the past eternity even more wonderful than the future. The present makes a glorious future a natural conclusion, but our ignorance in regard to how solar

systems spring into being and sweep in orderly harmony through a mystery of space evidently as vast as eternity, renders the past still the *divine miracle*. It is much easier answering the cry, "Whither are all going?" than, "From whence have all sprung?"

'That will do, Rosa dear,' her aunt said. 'I might have known such a dash of mere random imagining would start you on a sceptical flight of inquiry. However, as you say, for once I have beat you in reckless freethinking. I really do not know what possessed me to advance such bombast. Of late, however, I have found fancy roving rather lawless. I suppose it is a sure sign of dotage stealing over the brain, so I must be careful not to allow the devil the advantage even in my old age. Job found it was useless searching for God by sheer strength of intellect, and that the righteousness of mere human excellence is but filthy rags. And you, too, will find a life of intellectual or abstract communion of small benefit either to yourself or humanity. Only the elect by grace are saved, only by blood can sin be washed away, only by sacrifice of the Holy One can sin be forgiven. The hermit's cave and the nun's cell are often as impure as the open dens of immorality. Pure religion is something more than speculation about God's nature, or mere denunciation of any form of belief. However, when I reflect on your descent, and how you lost both parents before your ideas and beliefs were matured, I am not astonished that you have drifted into the scepticism of the age. Left alone with your father when the wise counsel of a mother was most needed, you early formed an acquaintance with a class of literature altogether dangerous for youthful minds. With your Radical freethinking on the one hand, and your earnest and intensely sympathetic philanthropy on the other, you are, to me at least, a sort of mystic phenomenon.'

'I suppose we are all a sort of mystery even to ourselves,' Rosa said. 'If I am a sceptic, I am only sceptical of error; of evil, ignorance, superstition, and prejudice, and my faith in the Great Author of life, as a beneficent Father, and in goodness as the most abiding power, never for a moment wavers or loses heart. Evil is, after all, but a very small, mean thing; and because not a few of its wretched manifestations are ever most vividly displayed in our family and national life, we assign to it a power, origin, and importance it does not inherently possess; and I cannot believe life is all over going from bad to worse. Some, however, even of the so-called *advanced school*, would have God to be for ever giving men and women sugar-candy so as to coax them over to be good, like naughty children. Our evil cannot in the least interfere with God's attributes or existence of placid perfection. But a dog barks at the moon and knows not why. So with those who interfere with the will and mind of the Great Source of all life. It appears to me, the man who cannot be cheerful and obedient working in a drain, will be a conceited, discontented fop in a drawing-room, and those who cannot love and trust God in midst of manifold physical discomfort and mental mystery will not be more reverent and trustful in a paradise of ease, plenty, and beauty. In regard to abstract communion or mysticism, these are terms merely indicating the unknown regions of mental and spiritual reality which are not sufficiently clear to banish all doubt

in regard to their existence. Therefore, what may appear to one a mere abstraction, may be to another the most real of all realities ; and what may appear mysticism to the generality, may be to the spiritual seer a vast existence of higher life. A few men are blind, and can see no natural objects, and only live in a world of smell, touch, and sound. Nevertheless we know natural objects abound in all variety of shapes and colour. So likewise in regard to the reciprocity of mind and spirit. If the eye of my mind can see deeper into the Divine Mind than some more exalted authority, the scepticism of orthodox faith in regard to my opinions and assertions in no way takes from their worth and reality. I do not dispute the fact that my ideas of our social customs and prejudices, as well as rational religion, will be considered by many unsound. Nevertheless, to me they are better than many time-worn traditions ; and I consider living far more earnest and awful than dying. However, you are fearfully unjust when you hint that I live a life of mere intellectual speculation. It is by love and sympathy, and by sound lives more than philosophic reasoning, that the evils of the world will be overcome ; and you know few labour more than I do to infuse new life and hope into our weltering chaosism of poverty, ignorance, drunkenness, and crime. Day after day I am in the dark lanes and alleys of prostitution, ignorance, and poverty, getting hold of some poor sinner weltering in the agony of despair ; and in the evenings I gather in neglected children, and tell them something of their divine origin. Their life down here is so hard, that I tell them in another planet, which they see shining like a star, they will have a fuller existence, and encourage them, even down in this misery, to believe a good God is their Father. I tell them to be pure and good, and they will see the smile of their God-father in the warm rays of the sun as it comes peeping into their miserable hovels. These dear children have few healthy books, and fewer friends, and I teach them to hear the voice of God in the listing wind, and to understand it is His goodness that tunes the melody of singing birds ; and His beauty which paints the lily and the rose ; and His sweetness that ladens the flowering clover with honey ; and to watch His never-failing goodness in the return of each succeeding springtime and harvest ; and to learn to grow up out of dirt and misery, into the love, purity, and holy obedience of Jesus.'





CHAPTER II.

FROM ONE THING TO ANOTHER.

JUST as I thought, Rosa ; you will teach all children you may chance to influence to join in your own foolish search after the unknown and unknowable,' Mrs. Aslawn said. 'I suppose most have to live to see and experience much which nearly breaks their heart. Such, however, has been my experience ; and it is peculiarly painful to feel I have nursed and brought up a daughter to forsake the faith and religion of her forefathers, and join in the vulgar clamour of social Radicalism. Rosa, it pains me far more than I can tell, to think you cannot be content to live a quiet, inoffensive life, in keeping with your noble birth and patrician training. It is heart-breaking to think you despise the authority of tradition and established forms of beliefs, and stand, single-handed, dealing out withering blows at the dogmas of the holy Church and the magnificent expense of our royal Constitution. Do you know, in my early days you would have been burned ! Really, I do not know what people mean. Even the opinions of Luther and Calvin are considered now but a revised code of Romanism ; and it beats me to foresee the end. Why you should come to the front as an unsettler of faiths is the thing which specially vexes me. I often think you are devil-posessed, for your eager eyes often appear like burning orbs of fire. Why seek to cleave asunder the awful mystery of human misery and suffering ? That is God's work, for only He can re-create the soul anew. I know you think you have been born for a special work, that you aim at sweeping away of all oath-taking in Parliament, and subscribing to creeds in colleges, and to unite a rational religion and radical Socialism with political legislation, making a sort of moon-shine Utopianism. Whatever you think, I have no hesitation in telling you, you are bringing contempt on your ancient family. You may stare ; but had your honoured father been alive, he would rather have laid you in a premature grave than have you going about teaching and promulgating false doctrine and a loose morality.'

'For some time, dear aunt, I have felt you were ashamed of my opinions,' Rosa said, and emotion made her voice tremble. 'I have noted your apologies for what you called my senseless acceptance of popular delusions. However, in any age, I suppose, it is impossible to serve God and honour conscience without making many enemies, and

especially if one belongs to a class particularly characterized as narrow, exclusive, selfish, and intolerant. Would, aunt, I could obey you in conscience and beliefs as I did when a child in matters pertaining to my education and actions in society. Now, however, I am a responsible unit of the human family, and the voice of God in conscience is now my supreme authority; and this inner monitor I will obey, even if I lose all beside!

In spite of all her pride and prejudice, and powerful self-command, tears filled Mrs. Aslawn's eyes, and conflicting emotion swelled her heart and sealed her tongue.

'Do not be angry, dear aunt, for I love you very much,' Rosa continued; 'and the very mention of my dear father's name calls up a flood of fond memories. The triumphs of conscience, of justice, and liberty, are, however, dearer to me than all other considerations. Although you fail to perceive it, nevertheless it is a fact that our religious systems are corrupt, and our creeds and confessions Godless and Christless. The time has come for reforming and purifying—and in many cases sweeping away—these worm-eaten shells. You speak of the holy Church as the Jews did of Solomon's temple; but the house of God is the wide, wide world, and His pervading Spirit is heralding in a resurrection of more righteous life. Even although it pain you, and sever all my patrician connections, my stand is for justice, purity, and equity. I have the courage of my opinions, and I am on the side of righteousness, which is tender and merciful as well as just; and those who fight for humanity—be they black or white, atheist or Christian—are on God's side, and, even if they know it not, under His special protection. Not even my father's ghost will prevent me from proclaiming that our sectarian hates and silly warring over doctrine and certain forms of worship—which are at best but a few rude patches of truth—are a disgrace to men pretending to preach Christ; and that much of our canting churchism is mere dead formality, cunning hypocrisy, and prudential trade speculation and sneaking to popular opinion. On every side, however, prophets and teachers are arising and proclaiming to the people that this aggressive imperialism in Church and State is the bane of all holy or healthy living. There are many Christs coming to the front, denouncing religious and political imperialism as the black beast of ignorance and arrogance which obstructs all true progress, which seeks to grind the working classes in poverty and dependence, which would bridle a free press, confiscate the land, and shut the doors of Parliament on non-churchmen and nonconformists; and when this strange mixture of Church and State imperialism goes forth to hunt the black man from his home, when it burns his wives and children, steals his cattle and long tracts of land, and tramples corn and wheat, rice and maize, beneath the hoof of Satanic cruelty, and converts the beauty and goodness of earth into the gory corruption of disease and death, it does all this in the name and for the glory of God, and scruples not to inscribe Christian on its pagan altar!'

'May Heaven have mercy on you!' Mrs. Aslawn groaned. 'Surely your reason is unhinged when you can thus earnestly espouse

the cause of the democrat and the atheist. Poor deluded Rosa ! from the bottom of my heart I pity you. Now I can see you are fairly sucked into the rapids of modern scepticism, and there is no help for you. God knows I would die to redeem you from such apostasy ; but according to your new revelation, the pathos and love of my poor bleeding heart are but dry, moth-eaten monsters, as soulless as my theological beliefs. By and by the arrogance and conceit of your school will venture to sit god on the throne of the universe. As it is, some more profane than others do not scruple to say they would have made a better world, and conducted its government with higher wisdom. One thing is evident, had these pigmy gods power according to their pretension, I doubt if they would be half as merciful as the Tories they so hate and defame.'

'I do not belong to any particular school,' Rosa sadly replied ; 'neither do I intend to stand up for any class of thinkers. We are all one, however, in so far as we are working in unity to increase joy, purity, and prosperity, and banish disease, misery, and suffering. I do not care what any or all believe ; but when Church or State put forth their power to repress progression, we must not allow them to arrogate or assume either absolute or infallible authority. Every man and woman has a perfect right to believe what they please so long as their liberty is not exercised to oppress those who differ from them.'

'Since, then, you seem confirmed in your opinions, I can only say that there is not much good for any one who throws off all church and state authority,' Mrs. Aslawn said ; 'only, I pray you, consider the debate with deepest attention, for I tell you it is a matter of vast importance. If you go on, you will soon find no good and no God either in heaven above or earth beneath save pride of intellect.'

'I do not wish to cast off either the authority of the one or the other,' Rosa said. 'Both have a place and a work to do ; but I certainly refuse to allow either the one or the other to arrogate absolute power, or to set limits to the human mind. I glory in my freethinking, which seems such an offence to you ; and Jesus was the most radical of all freethinkers, and the first to set the soul free in love, reverence, and aspiration after the spiritual and eternal. It appears to me pride of intellect is but a very empty heaven. A really great intellect is ever humble, sympathetic, condescending, and kind. The soul which soars into the infinite peaks of God's wisdom, power, love, and goodness, is in heart a little child learning here a little and there a little ; or, as Newton puts it, picking up a few grains of knowledge, while the infinite paths of the immensity of the unknown fill the soul with unutterable yearning. You call me profane ; yet I feel the very life of my soul is the inspiration of the Almighty : and I also know the beneficent Spirit of the universe would not flow into my consciousness to fill me with hopes and desires, yearnings and aspirations, merely to crush them out in darkness and death. I do not pretend to say there is no mystery or cause for the materialism which is eating the hope of immortality out of many noble men and women's creed. Neither can I explain how I shall feel when leaving this mortal body, and migrating away to another planet ; but I know, for a fact, that heaven and hell are places not far away, but down

here on earth, following hard on every deed done in the body with a blessing or a curse.'

Mrs. Aslawn gazed on her niece with speechless bewilderment. Never before had gentle, loving Rosa so spoken and affirmed; never before had she come down on political and religious intolerance with such sweeping condemnation; and a mixture of feelings sealed her aunt's tongue.

'I know, aunt, I am shocking you,' she continued; 'but do not take all your love from me. I love you very much, and promise all my life will be such as will make your days more sunny and bright. Save in regard to conscience and my duty to humanity, I will obey you to the very letter. Why need we fall out over opinions? Sound lives are more acceptable to God than sound doctrine, and more redeeming to humanity; and one real act of brotherly love and charity is more redemptive than twenty long prayers. Therefore, to live an honest, upright life will be the first and last of my creed; and when called on to lay down this body, my thinking, feeling individuality will be clothed with a more perfect frame, and find a place and conditions of life and congenial surroundings in harmony with my most tender longing and deepest conception of righteousness and holiest aspiration.'

'Rosa, it appears to me your happiness will ever consist in searching after the unattainable and unknowable,' her aunt answered. 'The truth is, if you live long enough to form a fixed opinion, you will commit suicide to make haste to see if you are correct. Poor, yearning, fever-tossed spirit! you are indeed a true child of the age to which you belong. Worn old long before the dews of youth have time to sink into and moisten the marrow of your life, your restless mind will consume your physical energies, and in mid-time of your days you will descend unhonoured and unregretted into the enthusiast's grave. I may oppose you; but I will never take my love from you. I have fed you with the very love of my heart, and like a dishonoured mother I am yearning to tear up those dangerous opinions which are fast encoiling round your entire being. Would I possessed the almighty power to command the unclean spirit to come out of you! Would I could becalm your fevered brain, and cradle you in the grand old faith, like a fond mother lulling a lost child to rest!'





CHAPTER III.

OVER THE AFTERNOON TEA.

WHATEVER the differences of opinion and beliefs either religiously or politically entertained by Mrs. Aslawn and her niece, the latter was essentially the light and life of her aunt's old age, and the sorrow of the former on that account, at what she considered sinful profanity, was all the more real and intense. To some her horror and grief at Rosa's freethinking may appear extreme and unnatural. All, however, who know human nature in its strange blendings of beauty and deformity, strength and weakness, and have any acquaintance with sacred and profane history, know that religious and political superstition and bigotry have made even parents condemn their own children to death, and deluged nations with human blood. In a word, the phantom god of superstition has slain its victims by millions, and even to this day it separates families, breaks up many beautiful friendships, and fosters and feeds a sectarian warfare which is burning downward into the very centre of modern civilisation.

'You look wearied, and not the least as if you were soon to be the leading attraction in a gay assembly,' Mrs. Aslawn remarked, as Rosa set in an occasional table, on which was laid a tiny set of antique china. 'Come, let us be free and easy over the refreshing cup, and let the sorrows and prejudices of life go to the wind. After all, we are funny mortals each and all, with a latent mystery of individual forces which renders them a wonder to themselves. With all your Radical freethinking you have many traits of character it would be well for our more orthodox ladies to copy. For example, your independent individuality in despising many forms of unhealthy and unbecoming styles of dress, and your preference of mental study to fashionable gossip, and your deeds of true charity and love (when others of your sex and age are merely loitering over trashy, sensational novels), are attributes, excellences, and ways of acting which appear to me highly commendable. But you go far beyond all that; and when I see you joining hands with the democratic mob who are working in and out of Parliament for reformed land laws and church disestablishment, it simply breaks my heart. Really we live in dreadful times; and the equalization of burgh and county franchise is bad enough, but this shameful movement for female enfranchisement is simply rank indecency,

and I wonder you don't blush with shame to be seen on their platforms. Now you go simply to show sympathy with the cause, you say; but the next move will be the daily papers reporting some of your bombast. To say the least, it is unwomanly. At your age, however, some ladies will do anything for notoriety, and our leading statesmen are to blame for giving the movement the least consideration. "Long live the people!" will soon be our national anthem. Democracy, forsooth! Heaven save us from such an end! Without our princely pomp and monarchical equipage we would present a sorry, vulgar sight. Like the beauty and poetry of flowers in the vegetable kingdom, the splendour and glory of princely pomp and monarchical equipage inspires the heart and soul of the lowly born with a halo of borrowed glory and dignity.'

'It is real glory and dignity we wish for the lowly born, and no tinsel delusion,' Rosa said. 'Aunt, I will tell you one real thing princely pomp and monarchical equipage does for these lowly ones. It compels them to toil and struggle against many unequal forces for a narrow wage, and then steps in and demands heavy duty to support an idle show of extravagant nonsense. I don't wish to call your monarchical mania by any hard names. I simply say it is unnecessary nonsense, and if the people delight in such, they have themselves to blame. Not by the will and decrees of fate or Heaven, as you would have me believe, are millions of men and women compelled to toil from early morning to late in the evening for a scanty income, which can only provide them with a bare supply of adulterated food and wretched house accommodation, but by their own stupidity in passively allowing Tory nobles to repress and obstruct all parliamentary reform which in the least takes from the tenure of entailed possessions. If princely pomp and monarchical equipage be of more value to the masses than self-help, it is a pity we should waste our days fighting thankless battles. However, for the sake of their wives and children, and especially for unborn generations, we will cry to the working men of Great Britain to believe in the gospel of self-help, and arise and have for ever done with ignorance, beer, and bombast, and invest all spare money in good books, and societies for the protection of rights, property, and life.'

'Ah! I see you have it all drawn out how in the future every one shall sit under their own vine and fig-tree, none daring to hurt or make them afraid,' Mrs. Aslawn remarked; and tears were in her eyes as she gazed with mixed emotion at the pensive maiden. 'If you can teach our fifteen million of workmen and women how to be wise, sober, and saving, you will not have lived in vain, but will have left golden footprints on the sands of time. Much as I believe in monarchical government, I consider it the first and highest duty of a ruler to endeavour to spread purity, joy, and plenty throughout the entire length and breadth of the kingdom. The king and queen are but servants of the great King over all, and He, the Holy One, only bleaseth and prospereth those who delight in righteousness.'

'If you go on showing how kings should reign and princes decree justice, you will soon be a Radical of Radicals,' Rosa laughingly remarked. 'However, when princes decree justice, they will be princes indeed of royal name and of more ancient descent than those we know.'

'A Radical, forsooth!' her aunt exclaimed. 'Rosa, I believe in hating as well as loving, and I hate all Radical freethinkers with the full force of righteous scorn. Only imagine a noble earl or lord appealing to the ignorance of an election mob for criticism on his reasons for opposing some hot-headed, foolish nonsense! The idea is as amusing as absurd, and your half-Tory, half-Radical, heterogeneous demagogue leader is just about stranded by the very mob he has stirred up to follow the Utopianism of his own teeming notions.'

'Very well, aunt, so be it,' Rosa said. 'You know you and I never get into bad humour. It is evident Toryism is in your eyes perfection, the one divine miracle. Still I say, Heaven help the nation which goes back to such rude barbarism, for it will find that increase of knowledge will simply lend it increase of evil power.'

'You are driving a little too fast, my little lady,' Mrs. Aslawn replied. 'I do not claim perfection for Toryism, and know it must change in expression and outward forms of manifestation to meet the growing wants of industry and commerce, and the tastes and genius of each age. Nevertheless, like Christianity, its laws are the laws and will of Heaven as these have come down from Moses, on through dim cycles of dark ages, and through many revolutions on to its present attainment of fuller blessedness. In our day, in great measure, prophecy is fulfilled. Our queens and princesses are nursing mothers; and, like the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley, the aroma of our Protestant litany ascends to God as a sweet-smelling savour.'

'However, the radical difference between the will and law of Heaven and that of Toryism, is that the former is always just and holy, whereas the latter is simply anything or everything to gain exclusive right to impoverize and oppress,' Rosa said, smiling at the aroma of Protestant litany and the bitter irony of our royal nursing mothers. 'Even the very change in the outward form of Toryism you advert to, is but one of many of its masks under which it more successfully plays its game of taking all and giving nothing. It is all eyes behind and before—fifty of them look after the crown, twenty for the nobility, and a little, half-blind, squinting one winks at the people. Whatever its outward expressions, its principles are oppressive and selfish, and it can only live and thrive amid superstition, prejudice, and ignorance. Like the owl and bat, it preys and grows fat and wanton on helpless ignorance, dependent poverty, and credulous bigotry. However, we need more than ballot-box freedom and equalization of franchise privileges. These advantages will never make men and women sober, industrious, intelligent, and independent. The want of the times is to enable the masses to make use of their mental and physical capital. There is too much "*Lo here and lo there*," and far too little healthful self-reliance and united organization. Even the most advanced Radicalism of our day has too much of harsh protest and seeming martyrdom, one-sided judgment and weak complaining. All over there is far too much mere partyism. Each and all have a cause almost as dogmatic, exclusive, and dangerous as the principle, creed, or code of laws they are striving to reform. At some points we may be said to have reached a stage where civil society is impossible. The senseless demagoguism that fancies an earl or lord

cannot be a real nobleman, and an able and valuable member of Parliament, merely on account of his accident of birth, is as foolish, unjust, and dangerous as the democratic insanity that fancies any man with a head on his shoulders, and sufficient money and cheek to pull him through an election contest, is a fit and proper person to take part in our national and international legislation. It appears to me, our politicians should all be tried, experienced men. However, we have many noble men and women in our schools of social science—men and women with cheerful, broad views of life, and deep reverence for all that is beautiful, holy, just, and true; and the literature of day and Sunday schools is becoming every year more rational and healthful. Not from bad to worse, but from bad to good are we slowly and surely marching; and the thing or principle you term Radical freethinking will for ever pioneer undreamed-of achievements, for it is an arrow winged from the Eternal Source of life, and neither knows weariness nor decay. If monarchy can be more just, more liberal and progressive than any other form of government, I do not care by what name it is called so long as it represents the highest good.'

'Please go on, Rosa,' her aunt remarked. 'Now you are sane and sober, and speaking as one of the wise women. I can admire honesty even in a Radical; and the rich, mellow tones of non-partyism illure the most prejudiced, chasing away their hatred with its celestial charms. Like the spell of poetry, it bids all jarring passions be still; and although we know it is impossible, we love ever and anon to fancy there will come a time when there will be no more evil, disease, or death. Even to an old Tory such heroic hopefulness and patient beneficence is not unwelcome. In all ages the words of the wise are like nails and goads in a sure place. True saving wisdom is ever gracious and acceptable, and is as condescending as noble. It comes from above, hails direct from the fatherland of goodness, and is as tender as a mother, strong as a father, and all-powerful as the source of its strength. Rosa, I often wonder where you find the continuity of ideas and the command of words. The truth is, your brain seems to teem with fantastic figures of huge unachieved, and, I fear, unachievable conception and inventions. One has only to hint at a subject or line of thought, and forthwith gushing Utopianism drops from your fertile sensorium in flashes of poetic inspiration. I often wonder if you understand that your thoughts are far too spiritual and transcendent for this matter-of-fact, mammon-worshipping age. I do think it seems impossible for you to realize that people generally don't want to know how to be pure, true, honest, and intelligent. Perhaps it is better you should, at least, fancy you have a sympathetic minority on your side. I suppose all need some real or fancied encouragement. Were you in reality to believe how little the world cares for enthusiasm, it might be all your divine fire and saving vitality would evaporate. Perhaps it is the same with all prophets, poets, and great artists and sculptors. The die is cast before they consider the cost of success or the poverty of reward, and when these are only reproach and starvation, those strange, mystic creatures simply bow their head, and make a dignified exit we know not where. Now I have had my say, please go on and let me see if

there be anything like symmetrical plan, design, rational principle, or practical result underlying your transcendent conceptions. You go in for dialogue literature, and if you write a tale, the very sublimity of your imagination will win you lasting fame. Like Milton, you seem most at home up in the mystic awfulness of infinite space. However, when you do take a turn through our streets, by-lanes, and glorious institutions, you are a cutting vivisectionist, exposing all our social cancers in all their loathsome deformity. Therefore, not in this life, but after you have been reproached to death, will you live and move a redeeming angel on the fetid waters of social corruption. It is the decree of stern fate, that all dreamers of dreams must be haunting ghosts from the shadowy land before they become human redeemers.'

'Dear aunt, you have not lived in vain,' Rosa replied. 'How wise I become listening to your keen, critical knowledge of the men, morals, and manners of our times! In your inner heart you are profoundly liberal, and ever on the side of all that is true and beautiful in humanity. I suppose within most there are strange contradictions between feeling and inherited prejudices and superstitions—contradictions so bewildering that the wisest and best are often a puzzle to themselves. The contrast of your pride and prejudices, wedded to worm-eaten belief and customs, and your intense love and sympathy with the poetic and romantic, and your beautiful appreciation of all noble work, and just estimate of the utter insignificance of public reward and popular opinion, rank you one of nature's most mysterious puzzles. Of course I can well understand how difficult it must be, in the winter of life, to cease believing in the assumed infallibility of doctrine you were taught in early youth to bow before as the very unchanging truth of God. To some men and women, I believe, the removing of a fixed religious opinion and article of belief is like dissolving heaven and earth, nay, God Himself, into mere shifting shadows.'

'You are rambling, Rosa dear, from the subject,' her aunt said, 'and, as usual, imagining all manner of absurd notions concerning my ideas and feeling. However, neither by subtlety of intellect, nor yet by sophistry of speech, will you divert me from my purpose. Therefore, I beg to remind you that I am waiting to hear more definitely of your social and political creed. Of course you hate the word creed, but I simply use it for want of a better. For instance, what would you propose in place of all you are condemning? Let me hear, and I will judge if your maxims and principles are capable of bringing forth grander and diviner results. And seeing you are so antagonistic to Toryism, and consider its obstruction of Liberal legislation and its positive evil when in power the cause of all our social misery, what would you suggest to our legislators in lieu of their so-called unscrupulous obstruction and blundering, and what the root of your grudge against us?'

'Many thanks for recalling my rambling spirit,' Rosa said; and it was evident her soul was far away in a world of ideal perfectness. 'When the mind is constantly flooded with ideal visions, we get far above the selfish considerations of the present life. However, you have, I confess, pinned me down this time. If there be anything I

dislike and endeavour to slip out of, it is being shut up to replying to one or more crotchety questions. I suppose you wish to know if my political and social principles are based on sound morality; and morality in a political sense may be said to be a system of righteousness which gives the greatest amount of good to the largest number. The truth is, I do not believe a real unbiased mind could establish an opinion or a principle, unless it was really convinced of the morality and consistency of the principle when applied to corporate society. The principles I build upon I have found in harmony with the deepest and most universal wants and aspirations of humanity; and at the same time, these principles and moral excellences are progressive life in my own soul, growing with its growth, and still expanding to meet the utmost requirements of more enlightened views of man's duties and obligations as man to man, and his relation to the Divine Source of life. It may take many years before it is generally admitted; for highest truth and divinest wisdom are seldom with the many. It is scarcely possible it can be so. All highest truth and divinest wisdom have ever been pioneered by some one solitary discoverer, and have had to fight their way through much opposing bigotry and ignorance before they became general property. So is it now; the higher truth and more divine wisdom of free trade, free religion, and just equalization of the franchise are being obstructed and condemned by the bigotry and ignorance of party sections who have exclusive rights to protect independent of all moral obligations. I condemn Toryism because it is pagan and antichrist. Of course, it claims to protect religion, and is Christian by name; but in the name of a peace-proclaiming Christ, and for the glory of God, it seeks to obstruct and stamp out all who seek to emancipate the mind from blind belief in dead tradition. All history attests the fact that war, under any circumstances, is a blunder, and has no educational advantages whatever. Brute courage on a battle-field is no criterion of heroism, any more than forced marches and enforced camp privations are an evidence of noble endurance; and all national advancement or gain by war is but a mere temporary victory which breeds within the vanquished revenge, jealousy, and hate. Nevertheless, with the gospel of Jesus in one hand and a sword in the other, unscrupulous Toryism hunts the poor black barbarian with shot and shell, steals his cattle, burns his helpless wives and innocent children, and fattens on famine abroad and starvation at home. In place of this monstrous sacrifice of life, waste of money, and spread of misery, disease, and starvation, we Radicals believe in peace with honour. We believe all international disputes can be settled, nay, must be, without the sword cutting through files of poor ignorant men who stand up to be shot for they know not what. I condemn Toryism because it will not give more rational and advanced measures a chance to prove the strength or weakness of their principles. If we Radicals know less than you orthodox elect of how Jesus, that great human giant of devotion to conscience, was God, bargaining with the more ancient attributes of His Godhead, and fighting myriad hosts of unseen devils, we know far more of His honesty, His righteousness, His purity, mighty heroism, and infinitude of human love and yearning charity, and wish to un-

swaddle the human conscience of superstition and error, and plant it anew erect before its Divine Origin. We wish our nation to continue, even in these times of great scientific discoveries, to be the greatest and most glorious ; to be great in free trade, in industrial productiveness, in art, science, and philosophy, with no creed subscriptions in our colleges, or mock oaths in our Parliament ; and we wish all this brought about by the sober, enthusiastic, wise deliberations of such men as the people choose to represent them in our great House of Commons ; and while life remains, we will, by voice and pen, protest against all Jewish dreams of imperial oppression and dashing adventure, wholesale murder, and wanton waste of money won by the sweat of honest labour. Even in dealing with home legislation, Toryism is an obstructing, arrogant principle or passion, cutting and squaring every important bill until the very germ of its vital power is shorn of vigorous life. It may seem a hard assertion, but Toryism can only grow and fatten on ignorance and superstition ; and when it comes to the front as a protector of religion, it hedges about the fatherhood of God with doctrinal absurdities, and crucifies all Christs, as, one by one, they come out from His bosom, quivering with a message for the people, whose word is life and truth.'

'Stop, Rosa ; I have heard enough,' Mrs. Aslawn said, as she sat fixed with bewilderment gazing on her impassioned niece. 'I can see it is hard for you to find language whereby to express your wandering idealism. Life down here is a stern, matter-of-fact business, and our politics must be of the same stern character. Poor Rosa ! like a Will-o'-the-wisp, a zeal not according to sound knowledge is leading you away. I hold that the art and science of war is educating ; and in the Word of God it is written, that until the end of time the sword will cut through the rebellious people who sit in darkness imagining vain things against the king.'

'Nay, aunt, you are unjust,' Rosa continued. 'You shut me up, and demanded from me some reasonable reason of my grudge against your party, and you must hear me out, even if I say things hard to be endured. However, I will only say Liberalism wishes to emancipate the human conscience from degrading slavery, alike socially, politically, and religiously. Nevertheless, I would not attempt dogmatizing on any discovery, either scientific or social, nor seek to crystallize any particular form of government, but rather leave all our outward forms of civil legislation and religious worship to the exigencies, enlightenment, tastes, and wisdom of each generation. It appears to me, the greatest want of our times is increase of mental enlightenment and liberal education among the masses, so as to enable the great majority to have some real knowledge of what Liberal government really is, and be able to understand and appreciate a consistent, progressive government. However, before the people generally are enlightened, we must have an emancipated pulpit, and not assembly halls of bigots wrangling over dead dogmas, and throwing overboard the best intellect, most scholarly attainments, and purest lives, simply because these affirm that the Spirit of God is more than a book, a creed, or a church, or even all tradition ; that it is the bread of life, ever flowing into every age and every race

with new evolutions of truth and righteousness. With an emancipated pulpit, we need a more consistent, less pandering press; and earnest philanthropy, destitute of sectarian fanaticism, and carried on with united energy according to the most advanced principles of social science; and authors who will adorn conscience even if they only have a stone given instead of bread. You condemn the unrest of the present age, but in some respects I regard this feverish activity as an earnest of the imprisoned mind's yearning anxiety to burst asunder its fetters, so that it may sail away into the limitless freedom of liberty. With all its faults, blundering mistakes, mawkish morality, apish mannerism, soulless conventionalism, and tenacious clinging to dead tradition, our age is the divinest in our old world's history. It is the glorious lustre of its attained excellences which reflects its follies, foibles, misery, and selfishness in such vivid contrast. Evil, and all forms of vice and misery, are now more disgusting and ugly because of the greater increase of goodness, and not because evil is more vile, meanness more contemptible, or foolishness more imbecile. Therefore, the seeming chaos of unrest, the earnest clashing of partyism, the hot strife between employed and employer, the conflict of religion with materialism, are all struggling birth pangs thrusting the inquiring soul into wider and more spiritual arenas of life; all these mental upheavings are eternal life eruptions, cleaving asunder the human-imposed curses of ignorance and error, and making a highway for the reign of righteousness.'

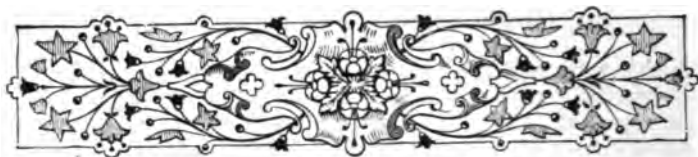
'Dreams, Rosa, mere fervid dreams and vain imaginings of a rapt enthusiast,' her aunt said. 'I am glad you intend writing a book, and modern criticism will sober you with some wholesome correction. Although I entirely disagree with you in the essentials of your faith, it is a pity you should waste all your transcendentalism on one solitary individual, now almost done with earth, and about to catch the invisible oars and row into the infinite placidity of eternal day. The more I see and hear of you, the more I am astonished, and almost appalled. Silently, and without the least show or pretension, you have grown into a sort of weird prophetess. However, as well that such as you write spiritual dreams for the amusing of the multitude, as that others throw broadcast mere sensational trash of languishing lovers and butterfly fashion hunters.'

'So be it; call me a dreamer of dreams if you please, aunt,' the young lady said. 'One thing, I would rather dream on for ever than wake up to march on, like a dumb driven beast, in the dead-march-of-soul benumbing conformity of fashionable life. I may be dreaming; but is it not nobler and more godlike to dream of all nations dwelling in peaceful and enterprising union, and of men and women living beautiful, virtuous lives, vying in all excellence of character, than to be a wide-awake Tory, a dead, doctrinal mummy, whining a dead past, whose monstrous bigotry is rendered more hurtful and stupid by the discoveries of science, and the living soul's communion with nature and the pervading life source of nature? Real, intelligent, honest criticism is the preserving salt of all that is good and beautiful in art, literature, religion, and philosophy. However, I have a sort of supreme scorn for the mass of hyperbole criticism which now-a-days so fluently flaunts its

arrogance and petty conceits and party spites before the public, and expects the inspiration of genius to chip and dwarf its pathos and passion to square in with popular opinion, morbid fancies, and narrow prejudice. I do trust these *cur-like* critics may soon have the rare opportunity of barking at many shining suns, and their noisy clamour will draw wise men and women to look and admire. Criticism, without accurate knowledge of the thing criticized, is of no more value than a spontaneous impression of love or hate. Only those who can enter sympathetically into the spirit, aim, thought, and inspiration of a work, can, in a real sense, criticize. On the aid and sympathy of such critics every real artist and original thinker throws him or herself, as on the sure protection of a wise and tender parent. You, aunt, may glory in what you call national prestige bought by sheer brute force, in a heaven-appointed autocracy, the empty pride of birth and the selfish privilege of position, in tinsel-robed knavedom, in assumed church infallibility, an electing God, and a heaven of anthem singing, and an everlasting hell of burning sinners gnashing their teeth; but I shall simply continue dreaming of a new heaven and a new earth wherein shall dwell righteousness—dreaming of a time when all nations shall dwell in unity, and when disease, oppression, drunkenness, and all forms of social wretchedness will be for ever banished. When I know humanity has the power to cast off every curse, even the loathsome curses of ignorance, disease, and poverty; and when I know there is within every human being immense possibilities of good slumbering and longing after the noble and true; when I know the most enslaved drunkard is an unhappy, disorganized wretch, hating the very existence his madness has converted into a chaotism of babbling foolishness, and how in sober moments he or she makes spasmodic efforts to slay the enslaving passion; and when I know the seared, cynical sensualist turns from everything with disgust save a noble, pure womanhood, muttering branding curses on our mistaken notions of morality, which condones male unchastity, and renders man a lawless slave to passions he should make subservient to reason,—I feel, as you say, that I am but dreaming, and through some want of real stamina, or timid shrinking, I am neglecting to step to the front and do some real work for humanity. The hearth, society, nay, the centre of Europe, is cold and barren for real, earnest, unselfish love and charity. Deny it as we may, all over the curse of caste or party dominion dwarfs every effort. To me it matters not what the name, the education, the creed, the church, or the social position, wherever I find a touch of true humanity, or a ray of real generosity, or feel the kindling warmth of holy inspiration, I find a truly religious soul in reception of some degree of God's own life and love; and with such a one, be they black or white, high church or no church, I can hold refreshing communion and sing holy songs, bowing reverently before deity incarnated in suffering humanity. The Haddingtons, for example, are Tory to the backbone, and the Claytons are Liberal to the sweeping away of all dynasty, yet we enjoy a solid friendship with both. These little facts, trifling although they may appear, are evidences that a more humanizing manifestation of truth is coming streaming in from the lofty peaks of new-born inspiration. Of course, as I said, for a time error will obstruct

the higher truth and diviner wisdom from becoming public property. However, the gathering tide will be all the more powerful because longer repressed ; and at last, both the memory and the bigotry of the men and women who thrust their petty prejudices and stupid dogmatisms before the spirit of life, will be swept away among the ruins which pass and perish.'





CHAPTER IV.

THE CAIN MARK.

WELL, well, you plead for your opinions and your party with some degree of eloquence,' Mrs. Aslawn said, mixing some port and water, and asking Rosa to serve her with a small piece of cake. 'However, in your enthusiasm you are forgetting the true expounder cometh after, dividing the wheat from the chaff. Now I have no inclination to advert to your separate remarks—in fact, to attempt to do so would be mere waste of time. However, I am inclined to believe with you, that truth and justice are conquering falsehood and injustice. If this be a God world, I do not believe it can for ever be overrun of evil. However, when you speak so ironically of everlasting punishment, you shock my whole religious nature. The truth is, your declamations against everlasting punishment are as absurd and one-sided as the bombast about conditional immortality. In these times, however, men and women with a bit of learning and too much talking impudence, propound any amount of absurd theories for mere notoriety. I know you hold your opinions in all sincerity, and simply repudiate the doctrine of everlasting punishment through mistaken kindness and your very limited experience and meagre knowledge of human nature in all its complex operations and cool, deliberate sinfulness. Out of mere ideal fancies, and a superabundance of too sensitive sympathy, you weave beautiful theories which find no recognition in the divine plan of salvation. Rosa, I am sorry to dissolve your simple faith in human goodness; but could you grasp the fearful possibility of a soul becoming altogether wicked, so wicked as to entirely burn out all trace of the divine and beautiful, so full of iniquity as only to desire to wallow in gross sensualism,—I say, could you enter into the fiendish thoughts and selfish feelings of an out-and-out bad man or woman, and watch him or her secretly gloating over wrongs, suffering, and sorrow,—you might form some idea of the possibility of man becoming so absolutely wicked as to make everlasting punishment his own creation, and not a decree of God. Another thing, I cannot allow you to run away with the mistaken idea that our friendships with the Haddingtons and Claytons are of a like kind. The latter, you must remember, are but beggarly upstarts to the Haddingtons, who can trace their unbroken descent from an ancient line of true nobles. Love and respect these

families alike, forsooth ! it is impossible ; and far distant be the day, and dismal its closing, when I extend a free, unconditional friendship to any Whig vermin,—agitating vermin who are everlastingly clamouring over one thing or another. Now, because people have got a deal their own way, they must clamour to have the duke's and earl's pleasure acres vulgarized into corn-fields and workmen's houses. And because a majority of these Whig vermin have gone over to congregationalism and lax theological opinions, and all forms of democratic church government, they wish to come in and steal the property of our national Zion, the Church around which Puritans rallied with the zeal of God's anointed. Rosa, in my young days men and women such as you would have been burned or imprisoned. Principle with me is a grand fact, a leading, unchanging power, and not the flimsy, flippant hook on to every new-fangled theory which is the characteristic feature of your party. Your so-called great-souled reformers are not indignant because of oppression, or in the least tenderly touched by the wretchedness of pauperism and ignorance ; but they have a greedy craving for notoriety, a jealous longing for the position dukes and earls inherit by birth, and they seize on the desperate necessities of the poor, and convert them into selfish capital of self-exaltation. If you can love and esteem the Claytons equal with the Haddingtons, your vulgarness of feeling is as shocking as your mental profanity. Surely the world is coming to an end when a young lady of true patrician birth and training speaks of the equality of friendship between a greasy manufacturer and a landed lord. I grant, however, that these monied, hard-headed heathens clamour for a sort of equality which has a potent spell for the uneducated. The question is, Do they live this platform liberality, charity, and ideal justice ? When you know them a little more intimately, and study them as narrowly as you do our pensioned princes and landed dukes ; when you get inside their workshops and huge manufactories, and peep into their gluttony in eating and drinking, and in sympathy become one of their employees,—you will discover the true nature, tendency, and influence of your leading Liberals. In vote-manufacturing and speech-making they are certainly the salt of the earth ; nevertheless they are cunning, selfish grinders of the poor. Rosa, I am an old woman, and have seen behind the trickery of a polling booth and an election contest, and the insincerity of platform speeches, and I tell you ninety out of every hundred of your long-winded Liberals are simply unscrupulous position-hunters, a prancing host of scribes and Pharisees ; and woe to our nation when such men are its leaders and legislators ! If you think I have overdrawn the picture, ask any half-paid, cruelly-fined, over-worked factory-girl, and her trembling timidity, spare dress, sunken cheeks, and grave shake of the head will answer you more truly and eloquently than any royal commission of inquiry. We hear a great deal about the waste of land, but far too little of the fearful waste of human life ; too much about pensions and Crown expense, and too little of female ignorance, subordination, and the evils of trades' unions' injustice. You clamour for female enfranchisement, but what of the wrongs of the shop assistant, and dressmakers with long hours and small

wages, and the long list of disease and early death such injustice entails? Without doubt Liberalism builds homes to shelter and redeem fallen women, but it might do greater service if it looked more narrowly into the causes which conspire to compel many unfortunate girls to resort to such a hateful mode of existence. Such, however, is the perfection of advanced Liberalism, it strains at a gnat, and swallows huge monstrosities of real evil. You, however, are but yet young, and easily led away by any outward appearance, and cannot be expected to have anything like a true or philosophic knowledge of the complex hypocrisy of modern society. It is selfish all through and through, and, at the best, with the majority life is but a miserable scramble for the bread which perishes. With true heroism you defend your principles and paint beautiful pictures, but these are simply airy castles such as we all love to build in the heyday of youth, when the heart is tender and the emotions intensely susceptible. Alas! as we grow old we find evil interlacing evil, coil after coil of all forms and complexions of the hateful thing lurking in the innermost core of society; and after you have reformed and re-reformed, you will find fresh outbreaks in your newly whitewashed sepulchre.'

Rosa was silenced. This time her aunt was too much for her. In her mission visitation she had too often seen fearful wrecks of long hours, small wages, and miserable house accommodation, in wasting disease, in reckless vice, and sullen dejection, to doubt the truth of her aunt's statements. Although silent and reflecting, she was not hopeless, nor in the least diverted from her task, but simply far too earnest and honest for defending any party or class of men at the expense of truth and justice.

'Well may you be sad and silent,' her aunt continued, taking advantage of her pensive reflection. 'You have need to reflect and see the error of your beliefs. As I hinted, you know almost nothing of the many subtle forms of evil nestling in the centre of seeming respectability, and which ever and anon come to the surface in solitary cases of more daring crime or reckless seduction. From a mere child you have been a strange sort of creature, taking in every lying story; but I always regarded your eccentricities with tender pity, knowing them to be the fearful evils which descend from parent to child. Born of a pagan mother, you, poor child, have in your veins the tainted blood of the benighted Hindoo, and in the very constitution of your nature the Cain-mark of a race accursed by God. I once thought, or rather dreamed, you might inherit your father's noble nature and patrician tastes. But alas! in all your tastes and tendencies, and especially in your theological beliefs and social opinions, it is otherwise, and I am actually witnessing, in your case, the sins of the parent descending on the child to the third and fourth generation. The truth is, Rosa, your descent from a pagan mother has evidently rendered you incapable of knowing good from evil. However, in the infallible word of Holy Scripture, we read it is even possible for the castaway to be redeemed by electing grace. Well may you gaze with mute astonishment. Rosa, unfortunate Rosa! with all your faults I love you. Perhaps I love you too well, and this very love makes me agonize in solitude over the stern decree which

has meted you such a cruel and hateful inheritance. Never before could I make up my mind to hint at your fearful brand, so that you might seek special grace to overcome original sins of such a deep dye ; but to-day you have so boldly affirmed, and so openly taken your stand with those who are striving to pull down the pillars of constitutional imperialism, that duty compels me to warn you that your first work ought to be the purging away of your own sins and iniquities. Of course, you know your father, General Anderson, was of the chosen elect, a devout believer in the atonement made by Christ, as well as a true-born noble descended from a grand old family. A Tory of Tories, he was a firm believer in the Holy Catholic Church. Only the other day, however, I read that the most advanced psychological thinkers are agreeing that mentally and emotionally the child takes largely from the mother. It stands to reason that such actually is the case, from the fact that the child's organs and faculties of thought and feeling grow and develop from blood permeated and all vitalized with the passions and prejudices of good or evil which fill the mind and colour the life of the mother. In your experience it is fearfully true. Physically I can see many traces of your father's beauty, dignity, and grace, but in heart and mind you are passionate and pagan, worshipping any god or all gods of your own vain imagination.'

Rosa sat listening like one in a dream, seeing and hearing sights and sounds cruel, incomprehensible, and unjust. While she listened, all beauty and rational order seemed drifting into chaos, and her stricken heart sank within her like a cold shrivelled thing, horrid mockery of life! In a moment, she had no God, no heaven, nothing save a blank, hateful consciousness of some monstrous evil too Satanic and huge for finite reason. It might be her over-sensitive nature gave undue weight to her aunt's vague hints ; but the stunning blow made her bleeding soul reel and stagger like a liquid speck of writhing agony, mists came over her mental vision, and trembling weakness robbed her of all power of utterance. Her good aunt must have some strong reason for thus speaking. Her birth must be associated with foul crime, and her vivid imagination beheld the secret chamber of bloody deeds slowly opening, and skeleton after skeleton of ghastly horror stalking out of the gory vault. Poor Rosa, what knew she of the doctrinal damnation of original sin? and in no way, save by the brand of some actual crime, could she imagine the iniquities of the parents visiting the children. Her aunt was not sure she had acted either wisely or justly ; but principle, or rather prejudice, was at stake, and she made the bold venture. Rosa was very pale, but outwardly she gave no other sign of emotion ; and when her heart ceased quivering, and a dull, dead pain throbbed in its torn centre, in dull, measured tones she said :

'Aunt, what do you mean? I am not sure if I understand you, unless this be some cruel jest. What are you hinting at? Is it of my mother you are speaking in that wicked, insinuating manner? To-day our luncheon chit-chat—oftentimes so full of rare, piquant pleasure—has taken some strange turns, and seems still to be intent on opening up more hidden streams of thought and feeling. Now it would appear I am about to listen to a revelation which shall freeze all my springs

of joy, and for ever add a deep, deep shade of shame and a bitter sting of remorse to a life I will hate and despise. However, even if life be henceforth rendered a hateful mockery of everlasting anguish, I will bravely endure it, drinking every drop of the bitter draught. I shall refuse to play the coward, either by cursing fate or plunging with suicidal haste to avenge me of my wrong. If the Cain-brand be on my forehead or in my blood, I shall meekly take up my cross and allow the glutting furies of a miserable fate to satiate their scorn at my hidden distress. Hitherto the past, in regard to my parents, has been a sad, sweet poem, a lovely vision in which I ever beheld their angelic and seraphic presence as the purest and best of earth and heaven. In the past, the sweet aroma of their memory has been a holy influence drawing me away from all mean, sordid desires; and in the rapt silences of meditation I have heard their voices in the garden of my soul answering back my most yearning aspiration, adding new veneration and hope to all my conceptions of the sublimity of devotion to duty, and in some indefinable way revealing to me the mystery of eternal life. Now, however, your words have blotted out all divine beauty and meaning, and in all material, mental, or moral existence I see and hear nothing save a sad wail of bubbling misery, as it sinks exhausted into a boiling chaos of inane nothingness. Is it possible that I am born under a fearful, infinite curse? If I came into life without any will of my own, branded and tainted through and through with shame and iniquity, surely God in justice, if not in mercy, will allow me to throw back the accursed gift into the devilish caldron from whence it sprung. In mercy, aunt, tell me all you mean. You may not think it, but your words are cruel and bitter as the pangs of guilty remorse, dark and deadly as the shades of despair and shame, and murderous and fiendish as the serpent-tongue of slander. You have thrown out fearful insinuations, and I must know the whole truth, even if it slay my heart and wither up my soul like a charred tree. I must have something more than mere insinuations and meaning hints; I must have real immorality or crime, some outrageous contempt of law and right, or I will hunt the vile lie to death. It is not old-fashioned Jewish theories or conceptions, or doctrinal twisting of reason and conscience to square in with some ecclesiastic dogma or belief, that will terrify me. In our assemblies and synods we hear a great deal of perjury to creeds and confessions, and humanly conceived notions of God's attributes and government, but far too little of the almost universal perjury to conscience, and cowardly fear to stand up for an honest opinion. Whatever you may think, to me it appears awfully monstrous to lie in God's name, and ascribe to the Great Author of all life attributes and feelings inferior to finite reason and justice.'

'Rosa, I cannot think you are ignorant of the Scripture meaning of what I have been saying,' Mrs. Aslawn replied. 'To the law and the commandments, and you will read for yourself what God says by His ancient servant Moses. And if you reflect for a moment, you will admit that the Indians are a pagan, accursed tribe, wallowing till this day in barbarism and blind superstition. However, for many years our Government has been graciously undertaking the pious work of

civilizing and christianizing large portions of these dark deserts of all forms of horrid cruelty. After all, I fear even to all eternity the poor Hindoo will remain a creature of questionable origin, a dark, benighted drudge, a cruel, cunning, lustful fox, ever bending under the heaven-imposed curse of slavery. With no history, save of brute barbarism, caste superstition, and crawling ignorance, he must ever serve the white man as an atonement for his murderous jealousy. The poor Hindoo has no Christ, no catholic church, no holy litany, no poets to chant the beauty of earth, no priests to plead with God for pardon,—nothing save the muttering thunders of the first murderer's curse.'

'In bare justice, aunt, you should also add that our Government has also graciously taken upon itself to rob and murder these poor heaven-cursed tribes,' Rosa said; and the fire of aroused indignation flamed in her deep-blue eyes, and the wrongs of the oppressed made her bosom heave and fall, and like an avenging goddess she hurled back withering anathemas at the marshalling hosts, who, with Bible in one hand and dynamite in the other, commit massacre and robbery which makes Miltonic devils dumb with grief and shame. 'Aunt, the rise and fall of nations, as well as the progress of religious beliefs, is a study well calculated to inspire within every reflective student charity, wisdom, and humility. Now, evidently, it is our day, and so far as we have hitherto thrust ourselves into direct conflict with less civilized races, we have made a miserable show of our vaunted superiority. The day will come, however, when India will be sufficiently enlightened, civilized, and educated to reconsider and criticize our present work. Nevertheless, when it comes to remind us that in its dark days of ignorance and superstition it expected something nobler and diviner from the professed followers of loving, peace-proclaiming Jesus than an ill-paid, dogma-promulgating missionary, an insulting, menacing residency, shot and shell, starvation and disease, I trust they will return good for evil, and prove they are greater in their defeat and subjection than those who lay on them heavy burdens. Think of it as you may, our invasions in India are as yet unproductive of any decided good to the natives or gain to our yearly revenue. We have neither given India freedom, nor prosperity, nor educational training commensurate with the wrongs we have committed; and the farther we intrude into its vast domains we find new complications of obstructions and forces confronting us with teeming life, and forms of social habits of which we had no intelligent conception. What is our Anglo-Indian society? Nothing as yet save an aping of the most narrow and disgusting traits of our social and political orthodoxy. When you say India has no literature, no history, no spiritual prophet, nothing save a dead past of creeping, crawling ignorance and superstitious barbarism, you do so at the expense of your acquired knowledge. If they be a cursed race, they have cursed themselves by allowing all divine inspiration to die out; but to say any nation or tribe of men are God-cursed, is simply arrogant presumption. Could He who painted the beauty of earth, and whose infinite beneficence stored it with fruitfulness, He whose immensities of glory and excellence breathe of goodness and greatness, curse a few tribes of finite creatures pulsating with a mystery of conscious life too wonder-

ful for them? Alas! curse enough there evidently is on every spot of earth where migrating mankind are found; but all evils are human-imposed curses, and over every form of cosmopolitan evil and anarchy the rainbow of God's eternal peace and love hangs, and the nearer we grow to divine perfectness, the more clearly do we see the combination of perfect harmony in all the evolutions of sentient existence.'

'Ever the dreamy visionary,' her aunt remarked. 'It is one thing to suppose and another to prove. If, as you would have me believe, the present Indian tribes are relics of some far back greatness, where are their monuments of science, art, poetry, or political legislation?'

'I grant you, my poor Hindoo brethren, so far as we yet know, have no past history to compare with hoary Egypt, or less ancient Greece or Rome,' Rosa replied. Nevertheless India has a past, when its mythology, hewn out of solid rock, transports us to a time when our nation had no existence save in some rude forms of fugitive barbarism; and these monuments tell of a history as real, if not so developed, as that of more renowned antiquity. Thus I hold, India has a history, if not of dazzling grandeur, of real interest and importance—a history when astronomy, chronology, cosmogony, theology, and legislation were in some forms expressed in sculpture—a history of a past when the human mind, without the aid of high-priest or lawgiver, was seeking after the unknown and infinite, and by some mystic influence they dreamed intuitively of a more rational elysium than our narrow strip of promised land inherited by the chosen elect. Then we find a less ancient past, when music and philosophy, as well as legend, constituted a verbal literature—a literature some of which can hold its own with more classic nations; and India, too, has its legends and romances of an incarnated deliverer and a huge deluge with only seed left to re-people the new-washed earth. If they have not a giant Christ, purifying every relation of life, grandly spanning the infinite distance between God and humanity, and establishing sonship with the Father, and the brotherhood of all races, they have their Buddha with a sublime gospel of self-renunciation and pure maxims, whereby the individual must crucify the evil and arrive at the eternal placidity of perfect freedom from earthly desire. However, one thing is certain, if India has no past history sufficient to teach and inspire more advanced nations, we are determined it will have a future history unique in horror, heroism, and brave endurance and mutinous revolt. The future is yet before India, and the wheels of divine justice grind slow but sure. Superstition and bigotry talk as if Tory pride, oppression and grasping greed, and imperial moonshine with a mummy crown, and Calvinized Judaism with its dogmatic absurdities and sectarian hates, were the first and last of the love and truth of Him who is encircled with the glory of goodness as with a garment.'

'I see you don't linger in my dear departed husband's library for nothing,' Mrs. Aslawn remarked. 'I know he had a pride in gathering in all ancient as well as modern books; but I really thought that you had more sense than believe every long-winded narrator of Eastern lore. I can see your fixed idea—and, mind you, fixed ideas are dangerous things—is a sort of cosmopolitanism alike in social and political science. And, if I mistake not, you seem to think a sort of universal affinity of

yearning aspiration will in the latter times establish a sort of universal religion. Alas ! you have only to consider the confounding of tongues at the building of Babel to find convincing proof that the great Head over all is opposed to all cosmopolitan unity of feeling or action. He leads nations and races by His own way, and why He makes one wise and another foolish are some of the hidden things which are His. The truth is, Rosa, the more you give out your extravagant, idealistic absurdity, I only the more clearly see the evil results of the subtle apostasy pulsating in your mental and moral constitution. Like your idolatrous race, you excel in making and bowing down to graven images. The god you set up is a sort of pantheistic intellectualism or self-worship, and a too fertile imagination has enabled you to weave a sort of historic mysticism around your savage relations.'

'Very well, so be it,' Rosa said ; 'I would rather be a black Hindoo a hundred times, than an orthodox Christian with a gospel of peace and mercy on my lips, and a sword and lustful creed in my hand and heart. I do not feel in the least degraded because my mother was an Indian maiden ; if we are heaven-cursed, we will at least be honest according to our position and advantages. The world is my country ; love, faith, awful reverence and righteousness my creed ; and eternity and immortality the mysterious gifts of Him to whom I feel a filial love. Such is my present inheritance ; what matters my descent ? You can, if you please, trace my physicalism down from the barbarous Red Indian, or from the slimy glaur of protoplasm, and I will still find in my present advanced development an earnest of a still more glorious manifestation of individualized organism. Like the wheels in the prophet's vision, life is all mystery in and out. When we think we have touched on the germ-bud, the subtle spirit recedes yet far behind all science, and when we fancy we have come on a hoard of swarming creatures fresh from the monkey, the earth opens to sing a diviner wonder as it spreads out its buried treasures of human skill. It was an Indian brain which conceived the epic of Rama, so Homeric in poetic clearness yet exuberant in poetic adornment. Therefore, as a half-Indian, I have something to be proud of.'

'Rosa, you would weary a saint. By and by you will have that grovelling race set up for our veneration,' Mrs. Aslawn replied, and it was evident she felt she had yet one fell shot in reserve. 'However, as you remarked a few minutes ago, there comes a time, sooner or later, with every nation, when the past, as it were, is recast, and a sort of just decision arrived at. The same in most cases may be said of families ; so it is now with you. The veil of your parentage, and all the misery and shame brought into your father's family by his low, imprudent marriage, must be drawn aside, and for the first time you will learn the story of your birth, with all its heritage of misery. Your mother, Rosa, sprang from one of the lowest or poorest castes of Hindoo tribes, and yet by the insanity of a blind passion she became the wife of the best-beloved son of a noble Scotch family. Physically, I was told, she was very beautiful, with large black eyes full of the ensnaring bewitchery of the evil one. She was, moreover, exceedingly delicate, which was another fatal charm, and pretended to be as artless and confiding as a

child. All her artlessness was, however, assumed to gain an end. She knew the British general was a prize worth scheming for, and she managed as women always do if they mean to win. Alas ! it was before the cunning craft and languishing sensualism of such a woman that my best-loved brother prostrated his entire manhood. Under such a siren influence he cast *noblesse oblige* to the wind, and supping the deadly poison of her unholy kisses, he sold his hopes of heaven, and dragged his patrician family into the mire of scandal. Thus trifling with temptation, he drowned his reason in a mudpool of sinful passion, and like one possessed of some demon, pressed the encircling siren to his bosom. When I again recall the first pangs of unutterable shame and sorrow which, like mountain billows, rolled over my soul on discovering the brother I loved better than life had dishonoured his name, his confiding family, and a wide circle of patrician friends, and had degraded his very physicalism by wedding a Hindoo maiden, a sort of vacant benumbedness again freezes my entire faculties, and anew I agonize over a dead past of rotten memories. You, with your equalizing ideas, cannot, I know, understand such sorrow and humiliation. Even to-day in wounded sorrow I cry, "Would God my brother had died on the battle-field, and been interred coffinless in a warrior's trench, rather than escape the dangers of war to unite himself body and soul to an Indian pagan." The truth is, I wonder I ever forgave him, or learned to love his cross-bred child. Rosa, may you never know hopeless, crushing sorrow such as mine, all brought about by the scheming being who gave you birth. With the inward evil of your natural tendencies you will have a fearful struggle. However, cling humbly to the cross, and cry aloud to Him who was nailed thereon, to wash away the shame and curse of your original sin, and adopt you as a free child of grace.'

Poor Rosa was trembling and quivering like a condemned wretch standing on the death-drop. As her aunt summed up she gained more confidence and heroism. For a time she felt as if she had no individuality, but was merely a straw or waif on some monstrous ocean of encircling fate. By and by, however, like a war-horse shaking the dew from its main, she fixed on her aunt two eyes like flaming balls of liquid fire, and in plaintive, pathetic tones said :

'Aunt, your prejudices and delusions are cruel and unjust as the hate of hell, and your boasted pride crawling meanness. I think you have driven me mad, and in Heaven's name I plead with you never again to speak of my departed parents save with love and reverence. If you ever again drag my mother's fair fame and heaven-given nature and origin into the mire and slime of modern pharisaism and canting pretension, I solemnly warn you I will forget our relationship, and repudiate your charges in such a way as to render it impossible for us to live in peaceful amity. Call me sceptic, atheist, fanatic, profane blasphemer, and every imaginable anathema, and I will endure patiently, ever gratefully remembering you nursed and brought me up to womanhood, and loved me as a mother. Call me all and every name you please, and I will accept all as necessary discipline. But in mercy, I pray, let the saintly memory of my parents remain as the most sacred and most beautiful, as well as the most holy inspiration of my life. The

memory of their twin spirits is engraven in my inmost soul as the most precious and most sublime of all God's gifts. Such being the case, you have nigh driven me mad, and I know not in what world I am. Listening to your fearful sayings, it seemed as if the black hate of some almighty fiend had blasted out all I know of God, heaven, justice, love, and goodness, and had converted the throne of eternal righteousness into chaotic anarchy. No wonder the orphan heart of the devout atheist, crushed in with a fearful solitude of heart and brain, cries there is no God; for a God more monstrous than the popularized God of modern prejudice and orthodox pharisaism cannot be imagined. Defame me as I said; a country, a cause, or a leader, and I will be reverent and respectful, ever remembering the courtesy of controversy and your privilege of superior experience and wisdom; murder me inch by inch with opposition, scorn, and reproach, and I will kiss the rod and thank Heaven for giving me the capacity to bear hard correction; but oh! if you have one pulsation of regard for me, never again enter into the sanctum of hallowed feeling, never again ruthlessly unearth my enshrined memories, before whose spotless purity I bow, and feel the dew of their celestial sympathy sanctifying my whole soul, or I will trample on all your claims of filial relationship and give blow for blow. Ah me! I am a raving maniac, but you have so insulted and outraged my entire nature that I can only speak in impassioned frenzy. Dear Heaven, whither am I drifting? I feel a dignified silence would be a more fitting tribute to my enshrined memories as well as a more powerful protest to your unjust charges. In the lives of my parents, you neither find vice nor crime, and in your mistaken zeal for mere prejudice and pride, you forget you are simply despising the very social evils and iniquities you, and what is called the exclusive class, hug to your bosoms as noble, distinguishing qualities. Why be so hard on the ignorant caste-superstition of the less enlightened Hindoo, when the same evil and deadly poison is running through the whole of the inner centre of modern society? You, aunt, with your patrician descent and pride in forefathers possessed of many acres of uncultivated land (insulting pinching poverty and shivering starvation), mock at what you call the vulgar pretension and extravagance of the princely manufacturer and silk dyer, and speak of the wealthy merchant, and all who have earned independence by the sweat of heroic endeavour, as low commoner and nameless nobodies. And these in turn stand aloft from their employees and assistants with proud mien and haughty superiority. The mistress of few days' standing, to some degree raised socially by a prudent marriage, shows by word and look she considers herself of finer blood and more delicate sensibility than her over-driven maid-of-all-work; the prim housemaid is a queen compared to the stable-boy; and the lady shop-assistant is too proud to recognise a factory girl. The author, teacher, poet, and artist know nothing save the splendour of learning and the nobility of mind; and the liveried policeman is a king compared to the street sweeper. The Free Church is God's peculiar people, the Pope holds the keys of heaven and hell, and material science is the tree of life in the centre of religious bigotry. With wonderful charity you cover over these multi-

tudes of civilized evils, and wax glowing in declamation of the barbarous Hindoo. For my own part, I do not care by whom begotten or from whom descended. All I ask from nature and the Author of life, is sound reason and wise understanding, and a fair opportunity to develop my innate powers, and provide honestly for my physical wants. I am, therefore, proud of my Indian mother and noble, independent father—too true and heroic to conscience for bending his manhood beneath baseless superstition. The impassioned earnestness of my Indian mother, and the patrician pride of my father, rage and revolt within me, and I am possessed by some impelling spirit. Would, dear aunt, you had never expressed your rankling wrongs. O Heaven! my love—my romance—my life and hope are all fled. Awe, dread, and burning resentment in turn possess me, and I am converted into a chaos of anguish beyond all expression. Noble guardian of my youth! what have you done? Nothing, you say, save opened a past of haughty pride and unjust contempt of the rights and privileges of all God's children. Now I in turn open the secret chamber of my enshrined treasures, and invoke the spirits of the departed to stand before you. Surely you have forgotten that my parents are not dead, mere inanimate dust or clods, but have simply migrated to another planet, and are still living and loving more endearingly in sinless perfection. I know they are perfectly indifferent to all our opinions down here, and smile with tender pity at the petty distinctions and selfish jealousies over which we war with such a force and waste of misdirected energy. Nevertheless, while their orphan daughter has power to speak and nerve to act, no one shall defame my mother's fair fame or take from the sweetness of her celestial memory. A Hindoo or Indian she certainly was, but no pagan or ignorant worshipper of graven images, but rather one who was daily in reception of the spiritualizing influence of Him who is the life of all. Although she was called home before I was capable of knowing I had a mother, I am not, as you evidently think, ignorant of her history. Often, very often, dear father told me the simple story of their mutual love, and with chastened tears spoke in glowing language of mother's sublime life of love for, and faith in, a Father-God. It was that poor, despised Indian maiden who first taught father the true meaning and beauty of obedience to the highest good. Reverence for all above her, within her, and beneath her, made every pulsation of her life a spiritual poem. By mystic intuition she divined the secret of true wisdom, and daily walked with God. Father ever taught me to cherish her memory as the purest and best I was ever likely to know of noble womanhood, and her sainted influence has been the inspiring power which has hitherto aided me in my endeavour to honour conscience and obey God. In the past I have secretly worshipped my sainted mother, and in all things she has ever been my high-priestess, leading me higher and higher into the sublime heights of communion with eternal beauty. Therefore your cruel, uncharitable sayings have entered my soul like burning bars of red-hot steel, and my tortured spirit is raging like a surcharged volcano. Forgive me, aunt; what am I saying? whither am I drifting? Mother, I am again a weak, lonely orphan! Father, I see thy still, cold form! I am again in the mysterious

chamber of death, and even feel the icy touch of your marble forehead, and it freezes my blood with creeping dread. Time has fled backward, and I hear your choking, sinking voice, as when you called me to your side, and holding me close to your faint bosom, said, "Come, dear, lovely Rosa! come, and let me feel your tender presence yet once again. Come close, and let us enjoy all we can of the little that now remains. Alas! my wee timid bird, my dear-loved child, your last parent's mortal life is swiftly ebbing away. I am, however, going to a more enduring state of being, where all my powers of mind will expand and blossom in perennial beauty. My gain will be your loss, and it is that which wrings my heart and makes dying intensely painful. You, however, have all along been a noble, heroic girl, and you must promise me to be still more heroic. In all your sorrow, never doubt the fatherly love of God; and if you have many forms of suffering to endure, ever remember the first duty of every one is un murmuring obedience to hard discipline. Do not expect much from a cold, selfish world, but tell your griefs to the shining stars and chaste, wooing moon, and these creations of God's wisdom will return you diviner answers than the miserable, half-hearted cant of churchism. When my seen vestment of mortal life is buried from your longing sight, speak to the drooping willow, fragrant flowers, and singing birds, and these will tell you more of God, His love, government, and goodness, than a thousand doctrinal theories of salvation. In early youth, Rosa, I remember thinking dying a horrid thing,—a fiendish curse imposed by some infinite devil,—and often ran into wild excesses to deaden the fear, and get away from the haunting horror. Living, however, bear in mind, is the only dreadful thing in earth or heaven. It is an awful thing, a blasted, wasted human life. Even if He would, God Himself cannot take from us our will and power to debase our noble nature. I have pointed you, dear child, to nature, and direct communion with the Author of all life, because nature has been to me the very word of God, a divine revelation written within and without, and because it was sectarian hates, and jarring, inconsistent creeds, and everlasting-hell literature which made me in youth a practical atheist, driven to and fro with every wind of passion. As I have often told you, it was the Indian maiden my proud relatives despised who first taught me true and rational ideas of God, and the sublime beauty and meaning of life. Now that I am soon to leave you, nestle close in beside me, and I will tell you the story of your birth and dear mother's death. You, poor, tiny babe, had but been a few hours born into this scene of scrambling misery, when she felt that her mortal life was ebbing away. In giving you life, she was doomed to die. However, she did not grudge the sacrifice. Her feeble arms were around me, and in low whispers she said, 'Darling, we have to part, but let us not repine. Have we not lived and learned this is simply God's nursery for rearing immortal spirits? This parting is not for ever. Therefore, let each do their part as bravely as possible. I do not know what awaits me of duty in heaven, but I know you have a sacred duty in being left sole parent of this tender child; and whatever my work in the eternal kingdom, I know our interests and sympathies will ever remain one, and

that I will the more please and glorify God in ever remembering you, and longing for reunion with you and our lovely child. When you lay my remains in the earth, plant a white rose on the grave, and call our little daughter Rosa; and never forget to water her young life with the dews of devoted love. By and by you will return home to your enlightened country and proud relations, and when they sneer at the poor, half-Hindoo child, remember my love, and that in death, as in life, I forgave them; and cleave to your child as you did to its mother. This is a sad, agonizing moment of parting agony, but when your strength in the long years before you fails, and you feel wearied and lonely, feel assured that my spirit is not far distant, ever tenderly entwining you. Should you, too, be called early, do not forget to tell darling Rosa how her mother lived and died, and that in another planet she continues her tender, watching angel, guarding her from the evil, and influencing her in all that is noble and good.'"

Overcome of emotion and touching memories, Rosa fell at her aunt's feet, and sobs and moans told of a deeper sorrow than language could reach. She was very sad, and awfully lonely, and so acutely pained and wounded that, at that moment, her wish was for the messenger of death to unbar her prison, and allow her to migrate away to more congenial surroundings. Crushed, wearied Rosa wept and sobbed, and her tears were like dew to her breaking heart; and her aunt sat like one entranced, seeing and hearing strange sights and sounds. Faces and forms long buried in the dust stood before her. Then, in reality, she felt 'there are more things in heaven and earth than we dream of.' The tombs of her departed relations seemed to have given up their tenants, and with awful vividness they stood before her, calling her to judgment. Arousing herself, her proud, self-reliant spirit returned, and she waved the unwelcome visitants away with an imperial sway, and, with a tender smile, turned her attention to the prostrate young lady sobbing at her feet.





CHAPTER V.

THIS DAY THE BURIED PAST REFUSES TO HOLD ITS DEAD.

OH dear, oh dear! what will the revelations of that day be when time shall be no more, when on this side the grave I am hearing such confessions, and listening to such unmasking of character?' Mrs. Aslawn muttered, as she stooped to comfort her sobbing niece. 'Rosa, you foolishly excite yourself over trifles. I had no idea of your latent powers; you would make a splendid actress. In that way you are a born artist, and would produce a powerful effect. I always thought you were more cut out for public life than the supreme repose of a dignified patrician lady. Such passionate emotion is your natural inheritance from your mother, and might be converted into paying capital. However, have done with all uncalled-for sighing and suffering, and do not spend so much vital energy over a dead past of rotten memories. Judging from your incoherent sayings, it would appear as if each and all only live to hide from one another. After all, what a dramatic creature you are, with nerve-power sufficient to blow up the universe! What mysterious creatures we all are, with a self within self—that is, with a double inner self more real as well as more complex than our seen and realized self! Rosa, it seems as if you were all double duplicates, with many inner selves or souls. When I think I know you, and can hem you in with opposition and argument, you suddenly turn out your reserve forces, and, like the chameleon, change your colour and complexion with every varying experience. What an inner soul of original conceptions and fancies you have of God and the spirit-world! What a lone, rapt spirit! No wonder you require no society. I confess I admire the manner in which you keep your volcanic forces under submission. In a moment you banish your passionate wrath, and smile like summer sunshine. I am glad you have the common sense to rise superior to such weakness. Smiling through the lingering traces of tears and emotional excitement, you appear like an angel of charity weaving a garland of hope over the dark gateway of everlasting despair. Rosa, we will try and forget the most of this day. If my noble brother was too good for hating his Whig enemies, who plundered him by fraud under the guise of friendship, and cast his orphan daughter penniless on the world, and so loved and mourned for a poor obscure Indian, I will not love his daughter any the less for the heroic way she has

defended their memory. Would, Rosa, you were a Conservative, and your clear understanding, vivid imagination, and passionate enthusiasm would do honour and heroic service to the heaven-born cause !

‘I trust I shall never be conservative of aught save the highest good, alike for the nation and the individual,’ Rosa replied, looking more composed, and feeling more charitable than might have been expected. ‘The truth is, aunt, I would rather be a creature of a lower order than identify myself in any cause, or with any government, which does not seek, by the grandest principles of wisdom, honesty, and justice, to bring about active good for all classes. That which is not according to the highest requirements of enlightened reason, and the highest and grandest conceptions of justice and brotherly kindness, is not that which should be established or supported ; and diviner enlightenment and wider conception of what constitutes true greatness will sweep away all the perishing husks of error and evil. You speak as if you thought I regarded Toryism as the one black curse of our nation, but Toryism cannot exist any longer than the ignorance and prejudice of its supporters. I condemn it because its principles are narrow and exclusive, dogmatic and overbearing ; and were it not for the monstrous want of anything like conscience in your leader, and his indomitable ambition and determined concentration of individual power, it would be impossible for Toryism to hold on. The nation is ripening for democracy in all its arts, sciences, and trade commerce ; and the greatest curse which could befall it would be a term of Tory government. However, the majority of the people are so easily led away by a splendid appearance of present good or gain, and landed proprietors hold such a sway over their dependants, that one cannot depend on an even current of progression and prosperity. You will, therefore, see that I condemn your party from no dislike to any of its blind adherents, but because I believe that in myriad ways it both directly and indirectly hinders the march of liberty and enlightenment, and inflicts wanton injury on the unprotected classes, in order that the more favoured few may abound in unjust power and luxury. I do not, however, pretend to uphold Liberalism, or any ism yet promulgated, as anything like perfection or infallibility ; but it is an advanced code of social and political science, and one advance will make room for a step farther. It is my opinion that political science forms too insignificant a fraction in college education. We should have political as well as medical and divinity halls ; for a wise or unwise government affects the entire of the nation in its most vital relations. If a headstrong, selfish government so act as to bring about foreign wars, and stagnation of trade and starvation at home, disease must follow after imperfect feeding and clothing, and the doctor’s drugs and the divine’s prayer will be miserable substitutes for the inhumane blundering. Not landed ninnies and prejudiced dukes can represent a city or a burgh in these active, advanced times ; and I insist that parliamentary members should be specially educated and trained for their position ; and if the democracy of the future would be intelligent, dignified, and strong with the perennial strength of wisdom, we must have men specially educated and trained in political science. Toryism must fall, because it is

founded on tradition, and not on vital principles. It is mere party or sectarian authority, not the authority of the living soul, which alone can survive all changes, ever varying in outward manifestations to meet the requirements and force of its inner life. In a word, it is a dead, crushing yoke, whose leading characteristics are brute force, vain, selfish ambition, greedy, grasping oppression, and cunning insincerity. Even when it uses the language and dons the dress of Liberalism, it is simply a knavish trick whereby it gains time to extend its Jesuitical order.'

'The old cry, Rosa,' her aunt said. 'Only I see you would introduce a new feature into your more Jesuitical system, by having political colleges, and overrunning the nation with a pack of atheistic Radicals. Like all your party, poor child, like autumn corn, you are swayed by every fanciful notion and passing opinion. Your prophetic boldness, however, is assuming too marked proclivities; and when you thus speak of Whig vermin as saviours and redeemers of the world, I lose all patience. What would the country have been but for the ennobling influence and greatness of its grand aristocracy? And what, I ask, would be the result if your mad equality system gained the ascendancy? The great masses of our background of ignorance and vulgarity can only be elevated, trained, and refined by the example and influence of an independent aristocracy. In all ages of the world, and to every nation, God's blessings and His message have come through the medium of holy men—appointed kings and priests.'

'I at once grant that the great majority of the people have accepted, and may continue to accept, their knowledge second-hand,' Rosa said; 'hence the necessity of our leaders and teachers being freemen indeed, following truth and conscience whithersoever these may lead. In all ages the real thinkers have been a mere fraction; and when original men or women take to crystallizing their belief and degree of enlightenment, they lose power as teachers of humanity, and degenerate into mere sect-founders. Neither kings nor priests are heaven-appointed as absolute or infallible guides, but to do their work according to the divinest dictates of reason and conscience; and when, through conceit or blind obedience to traditions and customs, they become stumbling-blocks in the way of progress, they must be removed. Think of it as we may, Conservative politics and Conservative theology worship tradition, hereditary possessions, a church, a creed, sacraments and fast-days, and believes in Jesus as a sacrifice to satisfy divine wrath; but neither the one nor the other consider Christ's life and example worth conserving, or worthy of imitation. If you are impatient at what you call Liberal presumption in speaking of an ideal humanity, and attempting to beautify earth, and make every man and woman realize they are indeed children of a good, beneficent Father, I also repudiate the redemptiveness of, or necessity for, aristocratic influence. Had you spoken of noble lives, animated by the purest motives, and swayed by noble enthusiasm, as essential salt, alike the necessity and desideratum of all times, I would fully agree. However, even granting that wealth and its advantages, in most cases, lend outward polish to the speech and deportment of the individual, its influence does not extend beyond

the palace, the mansion, or the villa, unless as a canker-worm, breeding discontent, and eating out the vital energies of the hard-working and ill-paid. If, as you say, it be true that wealth and superior education refine and elevate the few, this Liberalism you so depreciate seeks to enable all classes to become easy in circumstances, educated, refined, and elevated; and surely it must, in this world at least, greatly increase the happiness of you favoured children of inherited nobleness and election salvation to live under a political government which seeks to banish the horrors of crime and convert the wail of starvation into poetic adoration; that aims at gutting out the dirt and overcrowding of our lanes and narrow streets, and transforming the cotter's hovel and weed-patch into chaste cottages and fragrant flower-gardens. My dear departed father was wont to say, when feeling indignant at the way your party oppose and hinder all home reformation, that Toryism is a double-faced, sneaking serpent, never pleased unless blasting some paradise either at home or abroad.'

'I would warn you to be careful how you speak of the departed,' her aunt said, with rising anger. 'Although I allowed you to say your say, and give vent to your passionate incoherency in regard to his foolish marriage, I will not allow you to take the least imagined liberty with his memory. As a politician and churchman, General Anderson was a Tory of Tories, and in all save that unfortunate affair, a man among men, and sworn Conservative. Therefore, to put such profane sayings in his name, is but another sad evidence of the dangerous tendencies of your principles. Rosa, your rash boldness makes me shudder. If it were possible for your father's sainted spirit to hear even the echo of your false reports, his heavenly rest would be converted into weary anxiety.'

'My earnest wish is, aunt, that my dear parent is not far away, but very near, hearing all I advance in his name,' Rosa said, and her eyes wandered in search of some realized influence. 'It may vex you very much, nevertheless at heart father was a Liberal of Liberals, and in all things, both secular and sacred, far more pronounced in Radicalism than I am. Failing health, however, and growing love for solitude and study, rendered him too indifferent and meditative for making any public confessions one way or other.'

'Do not cast your eyes heavenward in that mad, fanatical-like manner,' her aunt replied, moving uneasy in her high-backed chair. 'To my mind there is nothing more revolting than the profane liberties modern freethinkers take with God and the spirit-world. It would be anything but conducive to the happiness of the departed were it possible for them to be very near those they leave behind. In their glorified sight ours must be a poor, miserable contention, and our crawling meanness, weak pandering to ignoble passions, and babbling ignorance, would be unbearable torture. Once for all, let me tell you that in speaking of your father as you do, you are treading on sacred ground. Never again, I pray, so much as hint that he had the least Radical tendencies. To do so is the grossest insult you can offer me, as it drags our proud name down into the mire and slime of social pollution.'

'You have the right and power to silence me, aunt, and that very right and power has kept me hitherto a pent-up volcano,' Rosa said. 'Nevertheless, that will in no way alter the facts of the case, and once again I venture to affirm that father was anything but a Conservative, and that whatever others might think concerning him, both socially and theologically he was Radical. You will remember the time your great Tory chief honoured us with a visit, as it was an epoch in your family history, and I shall never forget all the letters of instructions you sent to our housekeeper. I was by that time old enough to be at the dining-table, and listened with greater attention than was intended to all that passed. In replying to some of your lion's overbearing individualism, father said, "Honourable sir, think of it as you may, I have the honesty to tell you to your face that you are in a false position. By that I mean, that it is a pity for a man of your great force of individual power to expend it in promulgating injustice and hindering true progression. In our day it is utterly impossible for any reasonable, intelligent man to believe in Toryism or to support it, save for purely selfish purposes. The truth is, pride, ambition, old associations, and family ties and traditions have made too many of us sell our birthright. Yet, after all, what is such sneaking selfishness and weak conformity worth? We strain after an air-ball, which explodes with the grasp. Whatever of mercy and consideration we may receive from God I do not pretend to know; but of this I am sure, that on earth our memories shall rot and perish, for we have written our names in water and blood, and the tide of onward progression will wash our memory away as filthy stains, and love, charity, and amity will continue their glorious work in ushering in the brotherhood of all races."'

'Even if an angel from heaven gave out such absurdity as sayings of General Anderson's, I would call it a lie,' Mrs. Aslawn hissed. 'Had my brother lived a thousand years twice told, he would have remained a Conservative, ever more and more believing in all the decrees of God's eternal purpose, and ever more and more realizing that the established power and authority of kings are by divine appointment.'

'I know that length of days would more and more have increased father's belief in the eternal purpose of God, which is the salvation and eternal happiness of every creature He has made, and not the clumsy thing a few fanatical churchmen hold up for our love and admiration,' Rosa said. 'However, I trust we will not fall out over the opinions and beliefs of one so near and dear to both of us. Boys and girls have generally more attentive and retentive ears than adults give them credit for; and it was my privilege in my early days to listen for hours to conversation of a like nature between father and uncle, and I can assure you, none of your brothers were half so Conservative as the public gave them credit for. In that respect they are not alone, however, for too many theological and political teachers profess with the lip what they reject in the inner conscience. For example, I remember one day Bishop —, who is reputed a most consistent orthodox preacher, dining with us, and while sipping wine and walnuts he frankly confessed to father that he did not believe in the divine inspiration and infallibility of half of the Scriptures and the Church's

standards of faith; and that such being the case, Sunday work gave him no pleasure, because of the hampering, materializing theology he was bound to preach. The Bishop further affirmed that your political Jewish leader is at heart a rank Radical, but so destitute of principle that he amuses and exalts himself by introducing romantic adventure and barbarous innovations into the policy of our parliamentary laws; that he simply took the Tory side because the Liberals were sufficiently wise to have nothing to do with him, and that he will not leave the stage before he annihilates everything approaching to the old standard of Conservative uprightness and consistency, and merges the party into his dominant individualism; in a word, that he will continue his dazzling jugglery to the utmost extent, and when feeling on his last term of power, Samson-like will slay more by the venom of his death and defeat than during his undeveloped and more healthy activities, and that with immortal revenge he will drag the Crown into contempt, and pull down the old monarchical pillars with his expiring groan.

'Rosa, you are surely gone clean mad,' her aunt said, gazing at her with blank dismay. 'To-day you have vexed and angered me more than I care to admit. In the name of all that is sacred, what do you mean? Would you have me believe there is nothing real and true in the world? You have made me miserable, very miserable; therefore, oh! think on what you have been saying. Your vivid imagination has begotten all those wild fancies, and you take upon you to associate them with the actual sayings and doings of God's chosen servants. Can it be that you dare affirm that your uncle, Justice Anderson, sat and heard Bishop — deny the infallibility of any part of the Bible and the saving articles of our religious faith, and took upon him thus to traduce the greatest political leader of our or any age? O God! of a truth the bitterest sorrow which can wring the heart is when our idols and ideals crumble into clay. Ah! it is blank, withering affliction when we discover our public leaders and heroes are but weak, conforming creatures, and that our defenders of the right and distributors of law are cowards before God,—mere pretenders, craven liars, professing one thing and believing another for a morsel of bread and a soft seat and downy pillow. Rosa, for truth's sake withdraw those hateful assertions, and confess that you have been so carried away by party zeal as to seek to establish your cause on falsehood and dishonest imputation!'

'Would I could, aunt,' Rosa replied with great solemnity, 'for one liar is not much compared to many. However, I must speak what I know to be truth, even if I wound your party pride, and make your idols mere commonplace frailty. I cannot understand why you always set up uncle as a model man. Of course, he never dishonoured your patrician name by marrying beneath his rank; but I can tell you, despite all his prudent conformity, I never found much to convince me of his high sense of honour and uprightness. You will be still more astonished when I tell you it was uncle who first sapped father's Toryism. Unlike my dear sire, however, he had not the honesty to retire from public service. A Tory only in name, he still pockets £5000 a

year for defending and upholding principles and policies which he considers mere chaff. And to this day he is fighting his old game of sycophancy for name and position. When he marries, as marry he will, the same crawling ambition will rule his affection. His bride, however, will come to you crowned with a flow of unmixed patrician blood,—blood derived from the veins of dukes and earls who won their land and title by murder and robbery,—and her jewel-box will be well stored with precious stones and family relics. Nevertheless, her heart will be cold and cruel. No transparent streaks of fond affection will reveal the blessedness of a marriage of love and reverence. A complete beggar in everything, save pride and overbearing selfishness, she will adorn the ancient hall with her name and majestic mien; and who will care although no mutual affinities blend their souls in one? Despising the old man, she will marry the beautiful estate, and poor old Justice, bending low, like a lightning-struck tree, will at last tumble into the engulfing ruin of his sandy foundation. When fame is realized to be a mere shining bubble, and loveless marriage accursed slavery, and when the luxury of wealth cannot satisfy the heart, nor ease the pangs of an accusing conscience, the over-strained brain will lose its power, and he will perish like a dog!

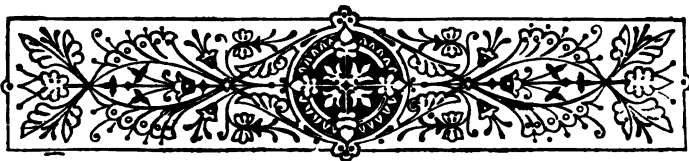
‘Merciful God! what am I listening to?’ Mrs. Aslawn exclaimed, gazing on her niece with bewildered horror. ‘Rosa, I have never known you, never for a moment dreamt you carry in your delicate bosom such awful secrets. Like a moral and mental detective, you have been watching and treasuring all the sayings, doings, and inner workings of your nearest and dearest. The unseen soul of all seems clear and open to your keen, critical acumen, and I feel as if I would hide my sorrow and vexation from your unsparing analysis. I could forgive you, were it not that your assertions and revelations have transformed all that I considered beautiful and immortal into ghastly hideousness, and my pillars of infallibility are tottering and shaking like rent rags. O God! what a day this has been! All I esteemed true and eternal as Thyself, seems melting into chaotic inconsistency. What do you mean, Rosa, by hinting that your uncle will marry? If he do, woe, woe be upon him and his house if he rob the orphan children of his brother and sister, and damn his soul by despising his vows to the dying.’

‘If Cousins Henry and Philip be of my mind and spirit, they will neither mourn the loss of his money nor the estate,’ Rosa replied, rising to meet an announced visitor.

‘Strange, wonderful creature, when will I really know you?’ her aunt muttered, as she adjusted the broad ties of her elegant cap, and prepared to put on her usual bearing of majestic repose. ‘Impulsive, ardent, and adoring, she is sometimes all feeling, to the exclusion of every other consideration; again, she is sharp, wise, and subtle, overthrowing the most carefully arranged logic with a few intuitive flashes of inspiration, which go home alike to conscience and our ideal aspirations. Strange, dreamy, contented creature, I know not what to think of her. Full of poetry and romance, society seems complete in her own individuality. Believing in no creed, bowing before no fast-day,

sacrament, church, priest, or book, she seems nearer God and truth than they who wear the garb of holy orders and lead the confessions of the people. While I hate her freethinking, and mad contempt of everything but an eager chase after the ideal, the infinite, and perfect, I am attracted in spite of myself by the spell of her noble and beautiful life. Even when opposing her schemes and condemning her beliefs, I feel society would be better if the majority of women followed her example.'





CHAPTER VI.

FROM GRAVE TO GAY, THROUGH EVER-SHIFTING SCENES WE JOURNEY.

LATER in the afternoon of the same day, Rosa was flitting about the spacious house dressing for the Haddington party, and her aristocratic aunt reclining in an easy-chair, watching her every movement with a romantic interest somewhat out of harmony with her orthodox speeches of the morning. Like most, however, Mrs. Aslawn had complexities and many seeming inconsistencies in her nature, which could not always square with her fixed ideas of established customs and infallible creeds. Therefore, she ever and anon found herself planning and weaving out ideal conceptions of a higher life—a life, the joy and purity of which are for the healing of the people. With all her weakness for birth-distinction and courtly pomp, there were cosmopolitan thoughts and feelings slumbering in the deep recesses of her inner spirit, and the indefinable reality of these undeveloped thoughts and sympathetic yearnings often peopled her brain with mystic visions, and new language welled up from her throbbing consciousness. Afraid, however, to accept these as real inflowing intuitions coming from the Spirit of all truth, she called them wandering fancies, vain imaginings, the result of some physical disorder. Only through the Bible and the mouth of His ordained servants could she learn the way of life, and the road home to the paradise of the elect.

‘I often wonder, Rosa, if you are aware that, physically, you are a gem of perfection,’ she remarked, when her many-sided niece stood before her dressed in white satin, covered with pale pink tulle. ‘For the last half hour I have been reviewing you with critical acumen, and find every feature of your face and form in symmetrical proportion.’

‘Aunt, you astonish me,’ the young lady replied. ‘You in turn are surely becoming what you call me, a romantic dreamer of dreams. Where now your orthodoxy, when you can speak in the language of trashy romance, and almost lay the foundation of a modern novel? It is a queer change to hear you flatter a vain, hot-headed Radical like me, and, I grant you, I am very much pleased with your compliment. Pray tell me, however, by what art or flight of imagination you manage to make me out a gem of physical perfection? I am neither tall nor short, stout nor unusually slender, nothing more or less than plain Rosa

Anderson, with neither bewitchery of face nor majesty of form to merit such distinguished excellence.'

'I often tell you you would talk the world into nothing were it not that matter is eternal,' her aunt said. 'It is all, however, the result of freethinking, which, by the way, is simply another term for atheism. The truth is, Rosa, I am expecting some of these days that you will venture to demonstrate the embryo of life in a few dashing structures, revealing to the perplexed mind of science the vital beginning of all creation, forming its complete proportions in the fertile womb of preg-nated, self-creating conception; not, of course, the slimy bed of protoplasm, but the conception bed of mental intelligence.'

'What an idea!' Rosa exclaimed; and her clear-ringing laugh was healthiest medicine to the delighted old lady. 'What an illogical speculation, as if preg-nated fostering beds could ever produce self-created things! The word preg-nated, like the first gaseous cloud, is a stubborn fact not easily disposed of, telling of a still more ancient cause. Talk of freethinking! no wonder dear father often said his eldest sister should have made herself a name in literature. Now I can understand why your letters made him so thoughtful, and caused him to call you a rare combination of surpassing excellence. Had you, however, stormed the reading world with such imaginative speculation, Toryism alike in Church and State would have felt it had a powerful opponent! Like seraphic-winged Milton, aunt, you would have walked majestically through the domes of God's immediate abode, telling how seeds first germinated and took a fixed and definite body and characteristic qualities, and how, by the perspirations of His infinite love, God begat the gaseous cloud, and then set about arranging and creating the huge plan of solar systems with all their immensity, law, and order.'

'Your sarcasm is as nicely seasoned as keen edged,' her aunt replied with evident good humour. 'It is, however, a characteristic of free-thinkers to conclude wisdom and understanding are the peculiar heritage of its disciples. Putting all joking aside, I am indeed glad to know my dear brother so valued my mental effusions. My letters to him, and all, may be said to be the flowers and fruit of my deepest thoughts and finest feelings, and I believe these might be published with advantage to this restless age, their leading characteristic being dignified repose. In my early days I wrote many essays and short poems, and was strongly advised to give such to the public. My idea then and now is, however, on that matter, that for mere vanity's sake no one should rush into publicity with immature thought. Thoughts and ideas which can guide, lead, or educate, must be long and carefully matured—in fact, ought to be the outcome of real experience, and born of blood, and the soul's struggle for truth. Now, however, had I mid-life and even vigour of will, I would write for the people. Not certainly fashionable nonsense, or a continual prattle of mere chatter, but real, plain, everyday experience. It is a fact, that the most realistic novelist has not half revealed the tragic facts that are coiled up in our background of social wretchedness. Somehow, I think, what we now call novel literature will, once it is exalted and purified, more and more

form an educating influence on the nation. Somehow I have a peculiar admiration for that class of literature which leads you on through grave and gay, finding life and truth as it ebbs and flows in individual men and women. The Holy Scriptures are all either history or story-telling, and blessed Jesus was the greatest story-teller in His time. There's nothing beats a good story. Thus in a word, Rosa; I should like to write a tale of our times, and make you the centre character. However, by every ingenious art, I would endeavour to fill in your mental vacuum with sobriety and common sense. With glowing language and dashing periods, I would describe your lovely blue eyes as deep, sharp, liquid, tender, pathetic, and changing in meaning and power, excelling in mystic beauty like the varying hues of summer sunshine. It might be, I would compare your rich brown hair to the golden cloud of morning, the leaves in autumn, or the mellow reflection of the setting sun. Knowing your impulsive, passionate tendency, I would say your scornful, finely-pointed nose moved in strange contrast with the dimpled goodness of your beneficent chin, and the coy sweetness and combining firmness of your small mouth. The matchless purity of your snowy bosom, and the elastic motion of your slender figure, I would leave to the taste and imagination of the reader. In order, however, to aid in defining your complex whole, I would venture to compare you to some angelic intelligence, moving and acting in harmony with the inspiring influence of some celestial being, and saddened by the opposing influences of a wicked world's contempt of your Utopian mission. Of course, I would remember you are twenty-seven next birthday, and find you a husband as soon as possible, or some enslaved admirer in a fair way to propose.'

'Aunt, you both charm and astonish me,' Rosa said. 'What an artistic picture! How I shall linger over it with fond admiration! Towards summing up, you are rather ironical on an old maid of twenty-seven summers. However, I am rather pleased that my silly, ignorant girlhood is for ever gone, and they only are old who live wisely. If you are drawing out that model novel, for goodness' sake don't make me a poor, miserable, love-sick husband-hunter. Whatever you do, give me a mission, an aim, some noble purpose; and without introducing the adoring swain, leave me free to do good according to opportunity. Somehow, I think my soul is too full of general sympathy and tenderness for ever crystallizing around one object. An old maid is a sublime poem, with her crucified affection, and self-sacrificing schemes of charity and love. Like St. Paul, I feel the time so short that it mattereth little. Many are increasing the population rather rapidly, and I think our times might honour a few of us old maids who are endeavouring to purify true love, and elevate marriage above mere legalized prostitution. Whatever you orthodox people may think, I am sure the good God never ordained half of our miserable marriages of cunning prudence, or insane ignorance, where poverty peoples our cities with unhealthy, improperly fed and clad children. If there be a life beyond the grave, I do not think my living and dying an old maid will in any way interfere with my future happiness.'

'Of all women, Rosa, you bear the palm for eccentricity,' Mrs.

Aslawn replied. 'With all your vaunting superiority, and indifference to male influence, I expect to live to see you falling head and ears in love with some brainless fool or immoral adventurer. What do you mean by saying, "If there be a life beyond the grave?" Do you add to your profanity by denying the immortality of the soul.'

'Not exactly,' Rosa replied in saddened tones, as if some haunting sorrow had been unearthed. 'However, in regard to immortality, as well as many other subjects, I am anything but an orthodox believer—that is, I reject the clumsy idea of a general resurrection, and regard conditional immortality as something more dreadful and absurd than election by free grace. However, I believe in the immortality of the human race; but although I feel within me the possibility of never-ending individual life, and also feel it is a blissful and desirable gift, I do not believe in talking in vague-sounding terms of a heaven of hymn-singing, and such like immediate rapture or anguish following after our exit from the present material frame. In short, immortality will never be fully established or believed in by the intelligent and sceptical before that we know more of the reality of spiritual existence, and come to understand whereby we can withdraw conscious individuality from its present vestment of flesh and sinew, and re-enter or be re-clothed with a more immaterial, *i.e.* with a body possessing finer organism, and capable alike of answering to all the necessities of the mind or soul, and of migrating through space on clouds of ether. Such knowledge will, I believe, by and by dawn on the human mind. If we were really and profoundly acquainted with our individual self, we would find the soul, or that which we understand by our complete intellectual organism, is not in feeling and thought alone, or a power seated or located in the brain, but is formed in all detail like unto the body—that is, our conscious individual *I* is a complete individualism, bearing or possessing within itself its own body, and may be unclothed and reclothed, not twice, but many times. Flesh and blood or sinew cannot by any reasonable or logical means be vitalized or made a living soul by the absorption and inhaling of breath, or the warm exhalations of the manifestations of life. A living soul, however—that is, life conscious, complete, and individual, can weave around itself a body whereby to express itself or manifest the inherent life. Now, however, for want of time, I refrain from enlarging on this complete spirit or soul, and how it comes to be a sort of orphan on this planet. However, even with such knowledge and beliefs, there comes at times strange tormenting doubts into my mind, and, like Job, I cry, Wherefore is light given to one hemmed in with darkness? Nevertheless, as I grow older and wiser I hope to see more clearly and apprehend more fully, for even when most doubting, God as a kind Father is realized as peculiarly near, making me rejoice in His gift of life. Therefore, when you call me sceptic, fanatic, and profane person, judge me by my life, for I believe it is better to bless than curse, nobler far to suffer than oppress, better to be sinned against than sinning, and more blessed to give than to receive. Whatever my theological opinions and beliefs, I believe it worth all the struggles with the flesh and spirit to go virtuous and heroic to the tomb, so that our mysterious *I*

may peer beyond the mystic gateway with a firm heart and clear conscience.'

Mrs. Aslawn was speechless. Deep, deep recesses of feeling had been sounded by her niece's touching sayings, and tears stood in her large black eyes. Rosa had no time, however, to linger for her reply. The carriage had been at the front entrance for some time, and they must needs drive fast to be in time for the Haddington dinner; and she hastily drew her fur mantle around her, and kissing her aunt's forehead and cheeks, and tenderly fondling her silvery hair, hurried away, waving tender *au revoirs*.





CHAPTER VII.

MRS. ASLAWN SOLILOQUIZES.

SHE is lightsome and untamable as a mountain deer,' Mrs. Aslawn muttered, as she leaned back in her chair and began reflecting on all the sayings of the day. 'Ever ready to forgive, ever gay and cheerful, kind and self-sacrificing, poor dear! I was too severe this morning on her pagan descent. Yet no rankling moroseness finds a lodgment in her generous bosom. It appears to me, however, that this outward aspect of cheerfulness is but part and parcel of her devotion to self-denial. I fear she is too reflective and wise for being so gay and happy as she appears. Ah! can it be she weeps and agonizes alone? It must be. I know she is very solitary, for she is treading a path of sublime sorrow with few companions and no sympathizer. Deep down beneath her exterior of patient submission I can see a thick stratum of infinite earnestness, and can hear the groanings of a spirit travelling for the birth of light and liberty to the spirit-bound. Life must be a deep, solemn mystery, when it can so arouse and arrest a lovely young woman, and sway her soul with such passionate enthusiasm. Rosa, to-day you have bewildered me. In turn you have angered, vexed, and enchained me with rapt admiration; and I feel, now you are gone, amid fur, satin, and tulle, that you are a complete mystery—a mystery far more mysterious than the subjects you are struggling to master. The truth is, when I begin to sum you up, I am completely baffled. I try you with pain and every form of mental torture, I put you in chains, and make you pass through fires seven times heated, but no temptation is sufficient to make you commit actual, defiant sin. What a day of revelations this has been! Every day and every hour she is outgrowing me, and all my ideas and theories seem more aged and frail than my perishing body. Surely, after all, God inspires her, and if that be the case, the word He gave to the Jews may be of small importance in our times compared to the new revelation flowing in through His living servants. It must surely be her knowledge is from above, for she is as wise as a sage who has lived the round of all time, and also sweet and gay as the flowers in summer, and her sceptical, yearning sorrow is haloed with the opening dawn of a holier faith. Her passionate sympathy with the suffering and oppressed is like the rush of a mighty cataract, alike awing, elevating, and refining. Her

earnest life shames all party distinction, dissolves caste pride like a frothy bubble, and stirs within the soul the deepest feeling of admiration. When her sympathy is aroused in the cause of the suffering, her deep, earnest wail of pleading eloquence would wring tears from the heart of a fiend, and her genial socialities can convert a hell of morose discontent into a smiling Eden of hopeful energy. But, alas! what shall I say of her daring freethinking? no church, no government, no book, no creed, no priest, apostle, or prophet finds an abiding place in her soul, unless they be in some way or other seeking after the absolute perfect and infinite. Even supposing a prehistoric man be found, even allowing that the Bible is not literally the inspiration of God, Rosa seems to believe these dreaded innovations will in no way affect Christianity, or the dignity of our nature and redemption from evil; that atonement through blood—*i.e.* the huge doctrinal plan of redemption as taught by our confessions of faith—must fall, but that Christianity as lived and taught by Jesus will remain as the first grand positive move of the soul towards oneness with its parent God, and that devotion to duty and love to mankind will raise it nearer and nearer to the perfection of God. Such, I think, is something like her beliefs, yet I confess I hardly know what she believes or hopes. Outside the great atonement all is chaotic confusion to me. Nevertheless, with all her theological and social heresy, I am daily admiring her more and more. Astonished, awed, and enraged in turn, we love and admire earth's heroes despite all their sin and unsound doctrine. What would Rosa think if she knew how much private assent I accord her? The truth is, I am almost afraid at myself, and tremble lest I be a castaway. According to our way of thinking, I am old, and should be staid and fixed in everything, yet I am the most romantic day-dreamer in existence. However, if it be true that we are immortal, the real self is progressing toward immortal youth, and only the husk is old and dry. Now that I am alone for the night, a longing spirit of indefinable yearning is stealing over me, and my empty arms are crying for love, love. In this moment of intense yearning, aroused perhaps by the strange revelations of to-day, this half-dust half-deity composition of mind and matter would not care to fall out and rupture the connection. Where art thou, departed loves? I am wearied and growing old, and the unfurrowed cheek and swift limb call me antiquated and out of date; yet in reality I am in advance of them all, and so young and bounding that the inner pressure of my burning life is consuming and cracking the clay covering. According to this world, I am indeed old; I have outlived all its follies and vanities, and have so little real, active sympathy with these new opinions and fashions, that I am wearying to be called away. In my early youth loyalty to our glorious Constitution and unbroken communion with the Church crowned the head with honour and saved the soul from death, but now the spirit of antichrist has come in. Blessed, thrice blessed are they who had part in the first resurrection! O God! who are the elect? or are we all elect alike, and each development of the human soul an advance in the spiritual link binding us to Thyself? The bewilderment and confusion are maddening, and new sects arise, adding to the chaosism. Would Jesus

Christ had organized a true, infallible Church, and authorized an infallible creed for all times and races? We know He bade His few followers to go and preach the gospel everywhere. But what is meant by the gospel? He, the meek and sinless One, had neither palace nor home, temple nor church. The blue sky and smiling earth were floor and ceiling to His sublime cathedral, and little children, and men and women, God, and flower-gardens, His text-books. If I mistake not, He paid the tribute to Cæsar with sneering sarcasm, saying only, Give these kings their due, and you will be in no danger of bearing social yokes hard to be borne.'

Mrs. Aslawn started at the sound of her own voice, and strove to wave the mad delusions away. Her inner spirit of progressive immortality had been regaling itself, and her Conservative pride and prejudice were aghast lest the birds of the air carry her secret heresy. Wiping the fever-dews from her forehead, she lifted her well-worn prayer-book, and had just begun her usual round of evening devotions, when a servant entered rather unceremoniously.

'Excuse me, mem, for this haste,' Jane said, 'but a carriage is drawn up at the front door, and I am sure it is your brother's, Justice Anderson. Maggie is opening the door; and seeing you never mentioned expecting them, I have hurried into your presence, lest you might be in part undressed.'

'Girl, you are surely gone clean mad! Have you been in bed dreaming?' my lady inquired. 'A carriage drawn up at this time! Surely no harm can have befallen my niece? If there be a carriage at this hour, it can only be some ill-bred Whig come to disturb my evening communion. Ah! it will be some social agitator coming to enlist Rosa's sympathy, and I have no patience with such trash. It is really dreadful! And I will be considered as bad as herself for countenancing her nonsense.'

'No, my lady, it is no one for Miss Anderson. Now I see the carriage fully, it is the Honourable Justice Anderson,' Jane replied. 'They have got inside, and are putting off their outside wraps. Make haste, and get off your night head-gear.'

'In the name of all that's sacred, who are the "they"?' Mrs. Aslawn inquired. 'My brother and company, and not a word of his coming!'

'I cannot tell who are the "they,"' the maid answered in low tones, lest the strangers should hear their remarks. 'It is a lady who is with your honourable relative. I have seen him so often, I cannot possibly be mistaken in regard to the Honourable Justice.'

'My God!' Mrs. Aslawn exclaimed, moving from the landing, whither she hastened to see and judge for herself, 'I know his voice; it is indeed my brother and that hateful woman. What a world of imposition and impudence! The report will be correct; he has married privately, and forgotten his vows to his dying brother. By heavens! he has made a mistake if he fancies he can buy me over with fine speeches and Judas kisses. No! I swear not all the gold or sophistry in the world will purchase him a night's lodging under my roof. Justice Anderson, is this the consummation of your generous promises, vows,

and sacred trust? Jacob-like, you robbed your brother of his rightful inheritance, and now in your old age, when all wild passions are subdued, you selfishly defraud his orphan. Merciful God! how my idols are crumbling into dust! My dreams of noble birth and pride of position are melting like snow-balls. Miserable man! if that woman be your wedded wife, you will bitterly regret seeking to present her to your only remaining sister. If you are one with that haughty shrew, woe, woe to your house, for my curse shall enter therein, and you shall have lonely despair for all the bitterness of heart you this night cause me!





CHAPTER VIII.

THE DERBY.

IF Fern had not come in winner in the last race, I would have been a ruined man,' Sir Charles Richland said; 'that is, I would not have been able to raise pocket-money, and sufficient to clear off my debts of honour—at any rate not without good security, and good security now-a-days, for such as me, is about as difficult to raise as hard cash. Five thousand is not a bad stake, especially when it falls into the winner's hands. I confess I was growing a sort of desperate, and watched that last race with a frenzy bordering on the horror of conscious madness. The wild beating of my heart was something dreadful; no wonder, in these times of fast living and intense excitement, we hear of so much sudden death by heart-disease. However, a short life and a merry one is yearly becoming more fashionable, and when one drops off, one consolation is, there are plenty gone before, so one does not require to fear losing the way. Joking aside, however, with all my heart I thank God for this turn of luck. Once I get this year put in, my financial day of redemption will dawn.'

'What of that, when you will run yourself in the same mess before many months, unless you repent of your extravagant excesses,' his companion said, a debauched-looking valet, evidently on the shady side of life, and a good deal the worse for bad treatment. 'The truth is, Sir Charles, mad betters such as you, together with your other wild excesses, would annually go through the Queen's income twice told.'

'Who are you lecturing, old boy, pray?' Sir Charles inquired, with a comical smile.

'Well, I certainly should remember our difference in position,' the valet replied. 'However, we have too long run scores for me marking mere outward distinction, unless, of course, when we are in earshot of a third person. If this betting system be the outcome of princely and dukely nobility, it is a sort of rough-and-ready morality. Next to an uneducated Irishman, I think a lord or an earl the best manufacturer of a sort of thundering oaths.'

'Why, old boy, your plain-speaking has of late been rather conspicuous,' Sir Charles said, drawing himself up on his blood-horse, and endeavouring by every means to assume a dignity he was far from feeling.

'My sincerity may be offensive,' the valet said, as their horses touched sides and kindly brayed. 'However, I am growing old, and disgusted with the old game of educated villainy.'

'By —, Jem, draw it mild,' Sir Charles said. 'Remember some of the head betters here are legislators in the Upper House of our Imperial Parliament.'

'I know,' Jem said. 'And ever since I was so nearly dead of fever, something I cannot understand has been knocking at the door of my soul. When I thought I was dying, the whole of my bad life stood up before me, and ever since I have been very funny. Whatever the cause, I am a changed man, and this hell-broil of a yelling race-course is stirring within me powerful feelings of disgust. The truth is, scenes such as these are a blot and shame on the pages of our enlightened times. To-day, as I watched the excited crowds of men, women, and children following after such silly vulgarity, they assumed the various appearances of fiends, idiots, and hardened, debased rascals, and the rearing, frothing, ill-used horses appeared like dying-diet, meekly submitting to the hellish fury of an insane mob.'

'That is indeed a wonderful speech, Jem,' Sir Charles remarked with a sneer, as he put his gold glass to his eye and surveyed his lackey all over. 'It is easily seen you are in for a revival preacher. Well, as you say, I suppose every one passes some time or other through the purgatory of groaning and yelling before entering into the kingdom of common sense. You were always an impressible, insane sort of a fellow, and this mawkish sentimentality is but one of many features of your vacillating character. I trust, however, you may soon get a splendid appointment to the holy order. It is the very thing for you; you will appear quite the thing in a black suit and white tie, and will grin sublimely over groaning maids struck down by your eloquence. It is rather mean, however, turning to the service of God after your physical strength is wasted by carnal excesses, and no longer able to obey the cravings of fleshly desire.'

'The time will come, Sir Charles, when you will repent of your sneering at sacred things,' the valet replied, turning to dash away a tear of wounded pride. 'I do not require you to remind me of my past follies. Too well do I know I have been a mad fool; at the same time it is a greater who is mocking at my conversion; and I now know that of a truth there is no such thing as friendship among lawless or immoral men. Honour among street thieves there may be, but among titled betters none.'

'Begone, you vile imp!' Sir Charles exclaimed, and his haughty form arched, as if to reach heaven for a lightning bolt to crush the wretch who, in form of a servant, dared thus to speak to him. 'I hate Satan most when he comes in the shining garb of a canting convert or a begging parson. From this time henceforth, remember, I allow no servant to meet me as hail-fellow-well-met. If you think you can take liberties with me when you please, all because I let you into a secret or two of my life, and paid well for your confidence and service, you make a great mistake. Therefore, if you again aspire to be my familiar friend in all things and in all matters, we must part.

If you wish to join the Ranters, just let me know, and I will give you a paper character, testifying that you are perfectly fit to lift up holy hands.'

The pale, delicate countenance of the lackey flushed with conflicting emotions of hate, scorn, and disgust, and his hands opened and closed spasmodically, as if impatient to deal blows at the head of the mean coward. Sir Charles evidently understood the inner feelings of his servant, and had reasons for not continuing the provocation.

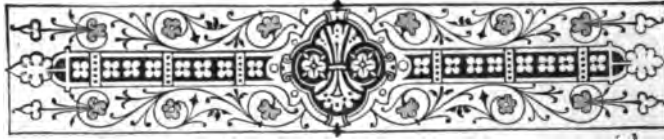
'I like to see your blood up, Jem,' he said. 'I know by the mounting colour and the move of your hand when you are at boxing point. If there be any place where we all may enjoy a sort of joking equality, it is on the Derby race-course. Joking aside, however, I am glad you are converted, or nearly, and getting earnest about your soul. However, you must allow liberty of conscience; all have their own opinion on these matters. With all my vanity and sensualism, I am not one who would like to become a mere clod after dropping the body, and you may therefore be sure I have not lost all hope of finding a place in a better world. Ah! we must part for a time. Here comes Lady Moray. By the bye, have you heard any more gossip of that charming lady? I thought she had a bevy of female attendants with her, but oh joy! she is coming all alone, sitting in the centre of furs, like a shining butterfly in a moss rose. Hasten, Jem, and do me the favour of keeping a careful watch over the movements of Moray, while I enjoy a short *tête-à-tête* with her ladyship.'

'I should like to listen to that *tête-à-tête*,' Jem muttered, putting spurs in his steed and trotting off. 'It were better stones were hung around such men, and that they were cast into the sea, than live to ensnare beauty and innocence. I know the game the black-hearted villain is up to; he is after arranging a private meeting at the ball to-night. She is far too young and confiding for the class she daily mingles with. What can one of her years know of the subtle guile of these matured sensualists, or their utter selfishness? No man can love either truly or warmly after having traded in vice as Sir Charles has. Only think of the profane scamp thanking God for his good fortune at betting! I suppose that must be the way a deal of the Old Testament worthies thanked God for their victories in dishonest wars; and fanatical superstition has set all down for infallible revelation of God's mind and will. What a jumbled thing life is, or, at least, modern society, and the higher up one gets in what is called the scale of distinction, the more there is to disgust. We hear a deal about the fast living and immorality of France and America, but if our aristocratic vices, and gambling hovels of profane drunkenness, and "Harmony Caves," low theatres of painted vulgarity, and our betting, barbarous race-courses, don't come up to French and American looseness, the sooner they are purged with a baptism of fire the better. Ah! there is Moray, evidently moving west, as if desirous of getting as far as possible from his young wife. The truth is, he must either be a black villain or soft fool, allowing those sensual fellows to flutter round her ladyship. It may be, however, that he is neither,' the lackey added, with a long sigh. 'What if, like this poor shipwreck, he has found, when too late,

that all his real love is centred on another! What if some fond memory haunts his lone spirit—some lovely image of a twin spirit, replete with all the excellence of a noble womanhood!’

Pressing his hand tight over some internal wound, the lackey continued soliloquizing until we lost sight of him in the busy streets of the huge city.





CHAPTER IX.

THE WAR OF PRINCIPLE AND PASSION.

SIR CHARLES RICHLAND rode up to the side of Lady Moray's carriage with a chivalrous dash, and acknowledged her ladyship's gracious recognition with every manifestation of reverent esteem.

'*Bon jour, ma chère amie!*' he exclaimed, doffing his hat; and taking her small, delicately gloved hand, he held it with lingering fondness. 'This is a glorious day! and, by Jove! I made a happy hit this last race. Fern came in splendidly. What was your stake—eh?'

'I've staked none to-day,' her ladyship replied, with a wearied smile. 'We despise the rude games of wild boar-hunting and bull-fighting of old times; but, after all, horse-racing, and the profane excitement of betting, is not much better. I believe a hundred years after this, a more rational race of men and women will put us down for a sort of half-savage barbarians. Would you believe, Sir Charles, that I am unhappy—in truth, perfectly wearied of what is called fashionable life?'

'If you are wearied, *ma chère amie*, it is for amusement and more endearing compliments,' Sir Charles replied. 'I know you, Augusta, better than you do yourself. Of course I know you are remarkably romantic and moody; and all these eccentricities add immensely to your charms. Your dislike to fashionable life, and to its gay aspects, is all assumed. What you want is not new aims and pleasures, but change of scene and opportunity to develop your natural feelings.'

'You mistake me, as you ever do—nay, I may say, as all do,' she replied; and the wearied, anxious expression of her beautiful face told how her spirit was withering in the sickly atmosphere of her gay circle. Her heart was yearning for the sustaining influence of one more pure and morally stronger than herself, to lead her into a higher and more beautiful life. 'You may be correct in calling me moody and romantic; but you misunderstand my feelings, and lay false motives to me. The truth is, to be plain, I am in earnest—that is, I am conscience-stricken; yet all my friends and companions love the very life I am hating, and laugh all my pious regrets to scorn. I think I will turn a nun, and thereby escape temptation. I wonder if any one ever felt as miserable as I do; yet, I confess, it was not always thus with me. Perhaps I am growing insane; for things are not to me as they once were, and the

more I think on life the more I think it is not worth living. If there be a God and a future life, we wealthy, who are revelling in luxury and all gay excesses, must be fearful sinners; by that I mean low, sensual animals, pampering our flesh, and remaining utterly indifferent to the state of the weltering poor. It is maddening to feel tender and sympathizing like Jesus, and see many ragged children waiting, like hungry dogs, to gather up the crumbs the butler shook off our luncheon-cloth. What must the poor think, viewing our carriages, and six or eight courses of finest luxuries, while they cannot get one good meal a day? It is dreadful; and I now understand how hard it is for the rich to enter into the kingdom of a noble spiritual life.'

'Good heavens, Augusta! what do you mean? It would appear as if I did not know you,' Sir Charles replied. 'It would appear the philosopher is right who has said the chief business of every one is to hide from one another. Believe me, however, all these moralizings of yours are mere absurd fancies. It is the business, as well as duty, of every one to enjoy his and her portion under the sun, without inquiring into the reasons of the inequalities of life. Therefore, if you be wise, you will have done with such mawkish sentimentality. Ours is an age of science and philosophy—an age when pious ranting and hymn-singing is on the decline, and every man is set on having all he can out of the present, and is leaving the future to provide for itself. Poverty and semi-starvation are old sores—chronic diseases which will ever remain; and it is my opinion God has other things to interest Himself with than the grovelling, lazy meanness of the poor, or the grasping ambition of the selfish. He made mankind after their kind, and gave them the earth for their inheritance, and has continued seed-time and harvest; and if some beg, some steal, and many bend willingly to the few who are kings and princes; if some whine prayers, and others compose poetry, some paint, and a few try to demonstrate His infinite existence, and go round and round His prior existence and intentions, as they would in measuring a corn-field,—what is all that to Him who sitteth on the circle of the clouds, and maketh the lightning His servants? Believe me, Augusta, you will indeed spend your life unprofitably if you begin wailing or moralizing over the chaos of social inequality. The beggar is generally more happy than the king; the convicted thief more honest at heart than the flourishing merchant; the impulsive sensualist nearer the kingdom of heaven than the cunning, conforming churchman; the atheist more reverent than the orthodox priest; and the factory girl's rest is sweeter, and her food better-flavoured, than the pampered child of fortune. Things are therefore more equal than the casual observer thinks. All our poor toiling artists, poets, and other professional men and women of genius, live with the gods, and revel in eternal rapture. Let us also be happy, darling; for, as the Bible says, that which is crooked can never be made plain.'

'Judging from the style of your satire, you conclude that, being a woman, I am incapable of reasoning or thinking for myself,' Lady Augusta replied. 'A sneer, a jest, or even acute satire are poor weapons to use in such a sacred cause. Whatever orthodox religion on the one hand, and sneering atheism on the other, may affirm or deny, I

am convinced there is unity and real beauty in human life, and that things are not as God wills or wishes, and that the duty of every individual is to refrain from adding to the aggregate of evil, and, if possible, by self-denial and generous energy to lessen the sum total of evil. Think of it as you may, I am seeking to break my slavish chains, and to cleave the surrounding darkness and find rest and liberty in the light and love of conscious peace. If your ideas be true, what is the use of all our preaching, our church-building, and church-going ?

'Your earnestness astonishes me, Augusta,' Sir Charles said, more and more at a loss how to reply to her ladyship. 'If you are determined to be a sort of argumentative, I shall have pleasure in affording you some amusement. People reason and talk of politics and literature in the same way as we take to horse-racing. It is all by way of finding pleasure or happiness, or outlets to mere personal vanity, inclination, or conceit. You ask, what is the use of all our preaching and church-going? Many men, many minds. All cannot be of one craft. Preaching is a profitable profession; church-building a refined and paying art, giving scope and reward to genius and other trades and crafts; and church-going a sentimental pastime. So long as we are such Sabbath pagans, I rather like the idea of church-going, especially as it is almost the only opportunity a fellow like me has of mingling with a class of women inferior in nothing save social position. In the church I can shake the plump, white hand of a sewing girl or merchant's wife without being considered out of place or vulgar. Nay, by so doing, I get up my reputation for Christian humility. All go to the church to worship some god, and any sort of veneration in these times is better than rank materialism or blank indifference. I go to church to fall down before good-looking women of all classes. You go to air vanity and self-esteem, and to worship the latest fashion. The merchant worships trade, and finds it flowing in the more pious he appears in conformity with custom and creeds; and the miser regals his ten per cent. with more ascetic delight and with less qualms of conscience under the mellow light of stained glass and the soothing sound of a charitable litany; and the minister prostrates his spirit before his fixed and logical ideas of the plan of redemption. Thus, we all go home none the worse but a good deal better for having a look at each other.'

'Your remarks, if cutting, are true in too many cases, I fear,' Lady Moray replied. 'What a reckless man you are! Truly, as one of our poets has it, life is a dream within a dream, and this Derby day appears the most chaotic dream of all. What have we come out to see? This race-course is a bubbling mass of meaningless inanity. It may be, however, that I am mad; but whether sane or insane, I am fearfully unhappy and tossed in spirit, and this very misery and discontent are surely earnestness that I was created for something higher, made for nobler purposes. Here we have neither the imagination of the poet, nor the arousing eloquence of the philanthropist, yet this graphic, naked picture of real life is maddening in the extreme. If there be inequality of position, there is evident equality of tastes and inclinations. The truth is, for the last hour I have gazed on the hungry-looking misery of squalid poverty and misfortune and tinsel-

robed vice, at the empty, strutting arrogance of wealth and rank, until my brain is reeling and my heart sad and wearied. The mad tricks of wandering jugglers, the low depravity of ballad-singers, the impudent imposition of stall-sellers, and the ignorant, miserable antics of showmen, and the profane enthusiasm of betting nobles, the hurling oaths of drunken jockeys, and the evident enjoyment of refined ladies, have, for the time, completely upset me, and I am going home to seek rest.'

'What a splendid novelist you would make!' Sir Charles replied, gazing on her ladyship with a new-born passion of nobler love. 'Would you believe, you awe and delight me in turns! You are indeed a funny creature. One of these one is never sure of. With all my jesting, I confess, as I listen to your low sweet voice, so dreadfully earnest, with a baptism of fanaticism, that strange emotions are thrilling me, and I am all over quivering with a sort of supernatural dread. I confess, however, I don't wish to be converted before I have had some more sport. Yet you make me feel like a harp responding to the master-hand of a perfect musician. It is, however, too bad spoiling the day's sport with such trashy sentimentality. You know I love you fondly, nay, adore you madly, and surely the love of one devoted soul is of more value than all that fancied chaotic confusion, which you can neither understand nor lessen. However, when we meet in the evening I will soon banish all that morbidity.'

'You are both cruel and unjust,' she replied; 'but I am simply reaping as I have sown. Such as you are incapable of sympathizing with anything save self-interest in some form. How lonely one becomes when they desire to overcome evil, and enter into the narrow path of a noble life! It is no easy matter being a Christian. It is hard being and doing good when no one is in sympathy with you, but rather mocks and misunderstands. Some can walk with God alone, but I have been such a fool, and He seems so far away, that I cannot span the great infinite and think out rational thoughts concerning Him.'

'Stop, stop, Augusta, for Heaven's sake!' Sir Charles said, turning his steed round to the other side of the carriage, as if by the movement wishing the more to indicate his impatience and utter vexation at her trashy canting, as he called it. 'What do you mean? Of late, I grant, I have noticed a sort of grave sadness characterizing your conversation. Surely some accursed spirit of cant has been let loose to-day: First I have been insulted by my footman howling like a risen Baxter, and now fashionable, flirting Lady Moray sets on me like an ill-paid Bible-woman. What on earth can it mean? If you are really after becoming a cloister bride I may move off. It is well, however, that untarnished virtue is not essential for gaining a passport through the corrupt gates of monkish asceticism.'

Lady Moray flushed all over, keenly smarting under the unmanly insult. In her inner soul she loathed and despised the heartless villain, but for some reasons of her own she hid her wounded feelings under assumed indifference.

'I am so wearied of all shams that I am grateful for sincerity in a rough form,' she replied. 'Go on; I grant you I am not a model of female excellence, and I fear the male sex never in all their history did

much to foster and encourage such. Since the time the first man, Adam, sneaked under the excuse of female influence, man has been characterized by anything save moral heroism. If men generally so much admire and praise female virtue, why does it seem the main business of the majority to win women over to vice?’

‘I like a smart retort even if it wound me,’ Sir Charles said; ‘and I would a thousand times see you mad with anger than canting like a tract distributor. However, if I appeared rude and unmanly, do forgive me, for it was not intended. Desperate diseases require desperate treatment, and so has it been just now. You know I love you so madly that I would die in your stead; therefore forgive me, darling, and let us be as before.’

Lady Moray smiled a sort of reassuring reply, and Sir Charles snatched her hand and hurriedly pressed it to his lips; then carelessly making another turn round the carriage, he dropped a letter into her lap. Without the least notice of the missive being taken by either the one or the other, the *tête-à-tête* was continued, and no one noticed anything uncommon or out of place. Another race set off, and begging to be excused, Sir Charles made a rapid run to have a good view of the contending horses. Again dashing up to her ladyship, like a gay knight, he said, ‘By the bye, I had almost forgotten to ask who were those gentlemen I saw you engaged with in the earlier part of the day.’

‘Do you mean those friends who had luncheon with us?’ she said.

‘Well, they did look as if they had been having something nice to eat and drink, as well as some rare mental enjoyment; and I confess, I wished them far enough away. They appeared rather familiar with your ladyship.’

‘Do you think so?’ she replied. ‘If they were, I enjoyed the familiarity. Don’t you know any of them? The younger is Henry Hamilton, and the other a French general, Monsieur Vance Chand d’Alby. The Frenchman is a stranger to me, but seems out and out a polished, full-minded gentleman, and his conversation is grave and earnest.’

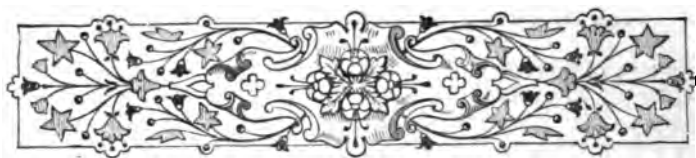
‘Indeed you astonish me,’ Sir Charles said. ‘Was that really young Hamilton, Rosa Anderson’s cousin? What a fine-looking fellow he has grown! How mere lads rush into manhood! I must be getting old. Do you know if Monsieur Vance Chand has met Rosa? She is of all women the most remarkable I ever met.’

‘No, I do not think they have met,’ Lady Moray replied. ‘At least, judging from remarks made, they have not. They are, however, on their way to W——, to live for a time with the ex-mayorress, Mrs. Aslawn, and I have sent my best love to Rosa. Would I had never left home! I was so happy and innocent roaming among the unfrequented shades of nature. I don’t think I was ever intended for a married life, that is, unless I had met some man sufficiently noble to be father, brother, lover, and husband in one. Perhaps I am a mad sort of creature. At home, I know, I was considered an eccentric sort of being, vulgar and common, not in face and figure, however, but in tastes and inclinations. It was deemed unfortunate that I had no enthusiasm for balls and husband-hunting, nay, a disgrace; and my

intense love of flowers, birds, and all the simple beauties of nature, and especially my vulgarity in loving to visit the aged and indigent, were sad blots on the character of a noble's daughter. I don't remember having a free, romping girlhood. I know by fifteen I was well matured in scheming for any wealthy old earl or duke who came in my way. However, when I got away a day to roam in the woods with Rosa, I soon forgot it all, and revelled in a real heaven of noble enjoyment. I never wearied sitting at her feet, learning the grand mystery of a true and beautiful life. You may deem me extravagant in my admiration, but Rosa is indeed very great and good, and was God and heaven to me. How different all her ideas of our Heavenly Father and the life to come are compared with yours! If you once heard her talk, as she only can, of the sublime grandeur of life, and our oneness with God as His dear children, you would blush at the very remembrance of your jesting scepticism. I feel I must tell her how deeply I have sinned, and once I feel her pardon I am sure I will find my way back to goodness. Would I had been the child of a poor but pious mother! It is horrible being a child of wealth and fashion, without love and religion, and with no aim, mission, or profession, to make life real and rational.'

'Goodness, where are you drifting to?' Sir Charles said. 'Your sensitive temperament is over-excited, and you are imagining all sorts of absurd things. The reason of it all, however, is to be traced to your ill-assorted marriage. Your morbid sadness is simply the yearning wail of hungering love. You are all love through and through, and must have mutual endearment, or your ardent spirit withers and dies. Outside your bonds you must and shall enjoy the perennial delights of mutual affinity. To-night, when I meet you and fold you in my arms, you will forget all these diseased fancies, and find joy and rest. Ah, bad luck! our *tête-à-tête* must end; here comes my lackey, and your noble sister and her precious old earl. Hers was indeed a mere catch the golden fool. He is as mad as a March hare, with one foot in the grave. After all, I do pity you young ladies; it is a cursed shame. Excuse the expression, love, more honest than polite. In that note I have arranged about the evening, and the dress I should like you to wear. *Au revoir.*'





CHAPTER X.

LADY AUGUSTA ALONE.

AFTER a brief, formal conversation with her sister and brother-in-law, Lady Moray leaned back on her cushions, and gave orders to be driven home. Unless when accompanied by Lord Moray, her ladyship drove out with few attendants, and that day she had simply an out-rider, and her *tête-à-tête* with Sir Charles was on that account the less open to eavesdropping criticism. From what passed, it was evident that some deep-seated grief had taken possession of the hapless lady, and once within her own room, she gave orders to her maid that she wished a few hours' undisturbed repose. In a home such as her ladyship's, real seclusion and true repose are almost impossible; and often, when wearied and sad, she almost cursed the glittering chains of rank and fashion, with its soulless display and endless rounds of customs and forms. Securing her door, as if to make her seclusion more remote and real, she threw herself on a couch, and burst into a fit of convulsive weeping. The entire fountains of her nature seemed aroused, and she sobbed as if her heart was breaking under some heavy bereavement. By and by, however, the storm somewhat subsided, and finally she was so becalmed as to sit up and gaze around, as if seeking from without for something to fill in her aching void or answer kindly to her mystic anguish.

'Alas, alas! all is confusion, misery, and vanity,' she muttered in low, sad tones. 'Already I am sick of life; already I feel as if I must plunge with suicidal haste into the abyss of the unknown. To me it is indeed unknown and deep and dark, with booming eternity on every side. O God! what shall I do? The law of my spirit is for ever warring with the law of my daily life, and yet I am powerlessly drifting along, like a mere straw on the bosom of the mighty ocean. Each side of my nature seems equiangular, turning easily to every besetting current of temptation. When alone, listening to an inner monitor, and feeling wearied and disgusted with my round of glittering vanity, I turn to the Author of life, and crave for the pure joys of a noble existence, spent in a useful pursuit of true wisdom. Then I try to form a prayer, and feel a sort of happiness even in the bare desire to be and do good; but, ah me! the moment I am among my own kind, listening to vain, flattering speeches, and hearing all I consider holy despised as mawkish sentimentality, I join in the merry round, and

feel as if being righteous was a mistake. I fear I am for ever undone, for I have called evil good, and good evil, until my moral nature is a dead, rotten thing, with neither energy nor will. The truth is, when I review myself, I appear a sort of monster, for a good and bad spirit in turn gains the victory, and makes me play the saint or devil at will. Would I were either the one or the other! would I had the power to go on scaling the narrow path which leadeth to perfect blessedness, or could so sin as to completely deaden conscience, and enable me to revel in the pleasure with sweet delight! I fear it is impossible to sin and not suffer. I have endeavoured by every art and power to cast restraint and law, and all those fine ideas of morality and conventionalism, to the wind, and to spread out my sails, and have a regular jolly time of it. Yet the deeper I dive, the more annoying is this croaking thing called conscience, and the less of real enjoyment comes. Would I had never given way to evil, and learned this cruel knowledge at such a cost! Evil is a mistake,—a mere invention of human frailty, —and the unsatisfying nature of its enjoyments is an earnest of its final destruction. Merciful Heaven! I am young and beautiful, and can this be the end of my life? I confess I am vain and weak in will, and like muffled drums, or black clouds of disease and death, these men haunt my path, and with fiendish cruelty entice me on to destruction, feeding with remorseless rapacity on my wasting sweetness. Had my life been completed in a happy marriage, it might have been otherwise; and when my sin is found out, more fortunate women will be my unsparing foes, hunting me into the weird shade of dry, lonely sorrow. Then no voice sufficiently humane will consider my temptation, or call to mind my secret cries for pardon, and earnest longings after the beauty of holiness. Whatever the issue, I feel the end is coming, and that I am done with a life of lying conformity, even if I must needs defy society, and dare it to do its worst. God is too merciful to allow this horrid war to continue. I feel I am daily losing anchorage, daily becoming more miserable, and either death or insanity must step in to benumb this cracking agony. I feel this secret, overwhelming sorrow is melting my brain, and all my thoughts are becoming confused, and I start at my own shadow. The wretched murderer is not the only individual hunted down with a haunted life; mine, truly, is a haunted existence, and my poor soul is wandering forlorn to and fro through the blasted ruin of its perennial life. What if this be conscious insanity? What if this be my sick soul, deprived of the judgment and arrangement of reason, and babbling like an idiot, sometimes in tears, sometimes with mad laughter and whining remorse, gibbering the incoherent story of its ruined life? Beautiful Augusta Haddington, your day-star is for ever set! It has gone out in utter darkness even in the early morning, and, like a lonely exile, your wretched soul will suffer in secret until welcome death snap the chain, and launch you into a wider and more just state of being. Merciful Father! at death I will return to Thee; forgive me for wishing for annihilation, for even as dust I am an immortal, strange mystery; even as an inanimate particle of dust I shall possess an immortality wonderful and incomprehensible as Thy infinite life. God and Father, I know there is love and pardon

with Thee, but I seem far away, and the confusion of this Derby day, and the reckless scepticism of Richland have enveloped me in a confusion which baffles my judgment.'

Weary, worn, and spent with passion and misery, Lady Moray's voice grew faint and husky, and soon her low, wailing soliloquy ceased. Still she sat on the couch, gazing with fixed eyes on the surroundings of luxury and wealth like one deprived of all hope or intelligent motive for continuing life. By and by, however, she started to her feet, and it was evident she had come to some conclusion, and intent on some purpose. Going to a secret cupboard or small press in the panelled oak, she took therefrom a small phial, saying, 'I must have sleep, Heaven's best boon to weary hearts, to mine denied; for misery has made me immortal before my time, and sleepless I wander like a haunted ghost.'

Carefully she counted the drops of the stupefying opiate, and when she had drained the measured draught and secreted her phial, she unfastened her door, and threw herself carelessly on the sofa. Soon the beautiful, hapless lady was in a state of half-sleep, half-dreamy consciousness, wandering in fairy scenes and mingling among enrapturing joys. With one sad, lingering kiss on her clammy forehead, her watching angel fled to heaven. Not yet had beautiful Lady Moray fully resolved to have done playing with temptation. Not yet was the war with passion and principle ended. Once more she has slain her better nature, and deadened conscience with a destructive poison. Can we wonder the heavenly messenger retired with tear-stained face? To a spirit released from all the infirmities of evil, it must have been a miserable sight to see reason, youth, and beauty stealing away to beg oblivion from the most cowardly as well as the most seductive and dangerous of modern vices.





CHAPTER XI.

MRS. ASLAWN'S TORY FRIENDS.

SIR DAVID HADDINGTON'S fine estate in Lancashire, and beautiful country residence, nestled in rich pasturage and floral surrounding some six or eight miles from W——. The noble lord's family was mostly daughters. In fact, there was only one surviving boy, and he was yet a mere child. The daughters, however, were universally admired for beauty and high-bred accomplishments. However, all their traits of physical beauty must have come from their father, who was a man of comely parts, with sharp, regular features, whereas Lady Haddington was of a very common type of face and figure. However, her deficiency of physical majesty and grace was fully compensated for by her shrewd mental powers, and prudential management of her rather narrow means. Her daughters must all marry well and early, and she was an adept at planning and scheming for their advantage. Full of self-esteem in regard to her way of managing and the training of her family, she was, as a mother, more characterized by cool prudential scheming than by the more beautiful traits of fond affection. Not their inner peace, or cultivation of a high morality, but their social position in the fashionable world was Lady Haddington's unwearied care. She was, however, as good as her neighbours, and never refused to subscribe to charity schemes, acted on the committee of ragged schools, and threw open her grounds for Sunday-school pic-nics. Those of her daughters grown to womanhood perfectly understood that mamma regarded them as lovely prizes, to be given away to the highest bidder; and it was wonderful how passively they allowed all beautiful feeling to be put to death. It might be, however, a sort of revenge on circumstances or fate that made them so actively exercise all forms of art and bewitchery to succeed in the matrimonial game. Whatever the reason, there seemed to be a sort of dramatic tact inherent in their composition, and the influence and aim of their home training brought it out in refined and dangerous power. Lady Moray was the fourth of these lovely ladies, and, like her three elder sisters, had succeeded in making, to outward appearance, a brilliant marriage. At Lady Moray's wedding Rosa was chief bride's-maid, and between her and Augusta Haddington there existed a sort of attracting affinity. Therefore, when the former heard gossiping reports that the latter was giving people room to be uncharitable, Rosa was

almost the only lady who took her side. She knew she was a victim of circumstances in giving her hand where her heart was not, and Rosa considered miserable Lady Moray more sinned against than sinning. If the latter had many faults and failings, she had more goodness and real virtue than the more conforming and prudential; and in Rosa's sight she was ever a fair, beautiful creature, with strong passions and noble impulses, beaten into a sort of monstrosity.

For some reason or other, at all Lady Haddington's parties Rosa was considered an essential attraction. Some went so far as to say it was a private arrangement between Mrs. Aslawn and Lady Haddington for the airing of Rosa's charms, so that she might have an opportunity of contracting an equal marriage, especially as her aunt's years and limited income were incompatible with much gay company. However, with all her mental accomplishments and physical beauty, at twenty-seven she was still unmarried, and many strange stories were current as to the reason why. It was no secret that she had refused more than one splendid offer, and that Earl Fairly, a man of immense wealth, still besieged her with his unwelcome addresses.

The generality of people will insist that marriage is woman's chief business in life, and Rosa's state of single blessedness evidently puzzled not a few. Some said she was a pure Platonist, and found no pleasure outside discussion on the subtle affinities of mind; and others, more given to weaving romance out of matter of fact, narrated how in her teens she had loved and lost, and made a rash vow of eternal virginity. Rosa, however, treated the whole matter as a good joke; and to most she was a sort of incomprehensible creature, far removed from all the petty jealousies over which some strive and contend. Therefore, the moment she was announced at the Haddington assembly, a thrill of general pleasure seemed to surge over the scene of perfume and finery. One gentleman in a corner, more enthusiastic, gave a sigh of relief, and inwardly whispered, 'Thank goodness! she has come at last; what a void is felt by the absence of one who, of herself, fills the earth with beauty and meaning! For the last half hour I have been waiting with subdued breath, and trembling lest I should hear some one say she was not expected.'

The Misses Haddington were tall, complete blondes, and their fairy-like, elastic forms were as perfect and graceful as their faces were faultless in features and delicate pink. Full of high-bred dignity, their manners were as beautiful and attractive as their rare physical beauty. In evening dress they were simply magnificent, and haloed over with a languishing, dreamy softness which lent an air of artlessness to their polished ease. When they moved from one end of the gorgeous drawing-room to the other, so profusely overlaid with art, reflected in great, massive mirrors, they appeared like angel spirits floating in aromatized space. Their long flowing golden hair was adorned with pearly crowns, and trailing trains of rich material hung around their small feet, and were puffed round their slender waists like angels' wings. Like their elder sisters, those now budding into womanhood were baiting cleverly for splendid marriages, and offering well for success. Rosa, considerably older, and darker in hair and eyes, and with a more developed

and snowy bosom, and imperial neck, was undoubtedly a grander style of beauty. In her brown curls she wore a wreath of pure jessamine, and a single row of pearls hung around her queenly neck; the vigour of earnest conversation had flushed her cheeks with a rosy tint, and the sparkling glory of her beaming eyes lent almost unearthly beauty to her spiritual face. Her every feature of face and form might be termed faultless; but her chief attractions were of mind and soul. Beauty such as hers gains with increase of years, and blooms with richer glory the more crushed and tried by sorrow and suffering; and to the sick and dying it is the face of an angel revealing the love of the Father.

'I wish we had been set at the other side of the table,' a handsome military gentleman remarked to his companion on the left, a classic-looking student, whose evident expression of original thought and depth of feeling marked him off for a man of peculiar tastes, opinions, and beliefs. At first sight, one thought him entirely out of place in such a gay assembly, and it was evident he was wearied and out of patience attempting to listen and reply to all the little commonplaces of the conventional lady on his right, who was a model of modern etiquette. 'I can see, Dawson, you are in the same frying-pan fever as myself. I can't make out what the hostess meant by setting us eccentric fellows in the very centre of soulless conventionalism. I suppose it will be a splendid joke to my Lady Haddington—a sort of fitting reward to our poverty of purse and position. Ah! I beg your pardon, a poet is king over society, but a poor commissioned officer, with nothing save his pay, is not a rich bait in these high-flown times. I had the misfortune of being late in arriving, and did not hear nearly all the announcements, and I am wondering if you can tell me who that lady is, with the white satin and pale pink, sitting on the right of General Graham. There is something about her peculiarly attractive. Thought and feeling of no ordinary kind seem reflected in eyes of heart's-ease blue. I have heard little snatches of the conversation, and with rare fluency she is discussing rather out-of-the-ordinary subjects with that Tory lion. Judging from his flushing face and look of annoyance, I can see she is more than a match for him, and appears handling her argument as if she had been at a hundred engagements of a like nature, and came off victorious in every campaign. It does me good watching the varying expressions on her beautiful face.'

'It is good you are speaking in a whisper,' the other said. 'If the ladies on our right and left hear our reproaches, it will be rather unpleasant. I am one of those who never care to satisfy any gentleman's curiosity in regard to a beautiful and intelligent woman. Supposing you are right in your conclusions in regard to the said lady's mental charms, why are you, a Conservative old officer, so anxious to know her?'

'Ah! you are all through and through a canny, cunning Scot,' the officer said, 'and, as a matter of course, answer one question by putting another.'

'So be it, my dear fellow,' the student said, 'only I tell you I don't believe in encouraging your indolent indifference. You were in the drawing-room, when the said lady was announced, but was so eager in

appearing your best before Miss Clayton, that you lost your opportunity. Like all elderly bachelors, you do enjoy kisses more heartily than turning over the leaves of a scrap album. Are you blushing at the kissing, or because I am classing you among bachelors? I am inclined to think it is the most loving and noble men who, through some shrinking or conscientious scruples, remain single, or, it may be, they are afraid their superabundance of conjugal emotions be wasted or thrown away on some unworthy object.'

'You evidently delight in torturing a fellow,' Major Wray replied. 'Cannot you consider that we poor military barrack-slaves have small opportunity of studying female character, and fewer chances of coming under their influence? and you might have allowed my blundering in the drawing-room to pass unnoticed. The truth is, foreign service a sort of barbarizes a man; and, I confess, I am a sort of out of my element here. For instance, I am not sufficiently clever for retorting to a book-learned, talking fool, such as a lion of popular fame. I am a man of no pretensions, but simply a wearied, morbid soldier, without the least sympathy with your romantic dreams and water-on-the-brain raving about a fixed idea, or transcendental schemes of social and political reform. I grant, however, that this impatient anxiety to know all I can about that magnificent lady is rather contrary to my expressed opinions. What eyes! sinking deep into a wearied man's inner soul, as if in yearning pity striving to harmonize the disordered springs of a disappointed life. What a dimpled chin of generous goodness! telling of a soul of boundless liberality. It must, indeed, be a divine, sympathetic spirit which lights up the countenance with such undefinable attractions.'

'You are waxing eloquent and poetic, Major,' the other said, with a low, musical laugh, indicating the pleasure he was realizing in subtly drawing out the latent powers and feelings of his companion. 'If you are neither romantic nor idealistic, but simply a morbid, matter-of-fact man, I fear you are emptying your glass too often, and that its subtle influence is waking neglected or latent powers. Remember, I pray, that the night is yet young; and if you are set on meeting the queen of your destiny, see you be clothed and in your right mind. The truth is, Major, you seem entirely ignorant of your latent capabilities. A few disappointments, and a profession not altogether congenial to your active tastes and energies, have clouded your spirits, blasted your early hopes, and fostered within you mistaken ideas of life. I really wish you would fall in love with some out-of-the-ordinary sort of a woman, so that the enthusiasm of a noble love might reawaken within you power to be, do, aspire, and endure. To return, however, to our starting-point, I grant you show splendid powers of critical acumen and appreciation in being thus arrested by the beautiful young lady so busy with your friend the General. Believe me, the moment she speaks one feels completely at home, and far away from all everyday commonplaceism. When conversing with her, one feels raised to a higher platform of life, and realizes that it must be that humanity is destined to live on through endless duration. If, however, you wish to remain free and indifferent to all romance and transcendentalism, do

not seek to know her. Now, I confess, she is essential for my healthful existence. How my entire soul thrilled and throbbed the other night when walking with her by the flowing Mersey! She is, however, although a complete artist, alike in fluency and strength, in conversing, sometimes given to a sort of abstract silence, as if absorbed in some overmastering theme. Nevertheless, it is golden silence, an eloquent exhalation of feeling which provokes to reflection, and prepares you for the new gems that anon issue from her rich treasury. On the night referred to, I made some remark on the strange, inseparable connection between sin and suffering, and the seeming cruel necessity or curse of death, and she said, "I can understand, dear friend, that you are seeking reasonable answers to much which cannot be so defined as meet the realistic demands of reason, which is a lower or less perceptive faculty than spiritual conception and the consciousness of feeling. Another mistake is, that most argumentative reasoners suppose spiritual conception and understanding can know and understand spiritual things without the soul being, to some degree, in sympathy with the great Source of all goodness. Therefore I will not attempt to merely reason out replies to your inquiries, as only by a life of purity and obedience to the highest good can we learn of spiritual things. The truth is, no real spiritual knowledge can be transmitted from one soul to another without strong mutual affinities and desires. We can understand a creed as we can any lesson of science and art; but we cannot learn love. Love must be felt to be understood; and although we cannot tell by what power or process the subtle influence enters into our being, and becomes part and parcel of our life, we feel we love, and no amount of reason would convince us of the opposite, or root out our capacity for its enjoyments. In like manner, we can only know God as a loving, living, personal Father by sympathy with Him, and desire for interchange of tender feeling; and the more of interchange of feeling, the deeper and profounder the knowledge of His character and the mysteries of the invisible life. Suffering and sin are both principle and power. In sin there is no principle, but in suffering there is both power and principle; and when these conflicting powers act and react in the mind, will, and conscience, we often call suffering evil or sin, and thus make the two contraries seem one or inseparable. Sin or evil cannot suffer; if it could, it would cease to be evil. Neither is evil sin until it is accepted, and made the weapon of our active will, to our own hurt and that of others. Some say God must be the author of evil as well as good, seeing all things exist by His will and power. Such reasoning, however, is at once narrow and absurd. The very fact that God made all His creatures good—that is, the very creation of goodness and bestowal of free or independent will, made it possible for creatures of finite understanding to introduce creations of their own; and if these creations were contrary to the mind and will of a good God, as a matter of course they must be evil, or the opposite of good. To say and affirm, as all orthodox thinkers do, that nothing can exist or be brought forth outside the will of God, is to make Him a huge impossibility or monster, and mankind mere mechanism. Or to say and affirm, that because it is perfectly possible that God had a foreknowledge that

mankind would be led away by their own lusts and desires, that this foreknowledge included the creation of evil, is also absurd. When a superior-minded man or woman, by virtue of spiritual insight, foretells the felon doom of a man of violent temper given to drunkenness, we never dream of imputing a murderous spirit, but the very opposite, to the individual of keen critical acumen. In like manner, it is contrary to all rational argument to say God's foreknowledge of finite weakness and possibility of falling into evil made Him the author or creator of evil. Evil is our own introduction and creation, and although it has run loose and wild, it is neither absolute nor infinite. It may hold its sway during all ages in some degrees or forms, but its most repulsive features will disappear; for, like bigotry and prejudice, which are, of course, some of its most pious offspring, it grows most luxuriant among ignorance. The suffering of the soul through sin is more immortal than evil, and through suffering we purge evil out of our entire nature. The body into which evil has introduced disease and decay must die; but death is no curse, but rather a blessing, in bringing in fuller life, and giving to the purged soul a body in harmony with its pure aspirations and unwearied activities. I cannot express in lucid language how I feel it possible for all our powers, remaining intact amid the decay of our present body, and how the soul is the body producer—that is, that it bears within itself all the faculties of the visible body, and that although the physical eye has failed as yet to perceive it, we migrate from earth in full individual form. As we grow in knowledge, however, we may more fully realize how the soul can array itself as speedily and naturally as we can dress the body. However, I conclude, as I began, by affirming that we only know God, and these spiritual experiences and mysteries wrapped up within our wonderful souls, by sympathy with the Author of our being, and devotion to the highest good.”

‘You are arousing my dormant soul,’ the Major said, ‘in a manner hitherto unknown. These are no hackneyed, everyday ideas and opinions, but thoughts and feelings fresh and fragrant as the morning of creation, and society all over is weary for such. You have made me more and more impatient to gain an introduction to said lady, for all you tell me of her are winged arrows of tender sympathy, lofty flights of arousing aspiration, and gems of choice wisdom and understanding. These thoughts reveal a consistent, loving God, as well as show how possible it is for mankind not only to overcome evil, but to profit by its failures through all eternity. The truth is, I feel better already; by that I mean that I am less cynical and despairing, for I now perceive order and consistency where I fancied it was nothing save caprice and indefinable, chaotic mystery. These thoughts of your lovely friend are truly gems of intuitive knowledge, which give to the human soul a reasonable reason for its earthly subjection to pain, disease, suffering, and death. Blessed with the friendship of such a woman, you must be happy, for you are in possession of the highest good. I do think woman has finer perceptions as well as a higher moral standard than man. I feel as if our nature was more incomplete; perhaps it is this incompleteness which renders a noble woman so essential for the elevating, purifying, and harmonizing of our life.’

'If we go on speaking in this fashion of God, goodness, and woman's mission and man's immortal cravings, I fear we will soon attract attention, and become an offence,' the man of letters replied. 'Nay, already I fear we have been overheard and commented on, as I see sour faces, curled lips, and arched eyebrows. I grant it is a sure sign of vulgar breeding, so says etiquette, to introduce such earnest sort of argument into mixed company; and when any two get absorbed or heated in some favourite subject, it is wonderful how oblivious they become of all else. Talk of education! I really wish there were some schools or colleges to teach ladies the art of conversing on rational subjects, and not drive us sober-minded fellows nearly mad striving to fish up absurd commonplaces for the dining and drawing-room!'

'You are right, *mon cher ami*,' the Major said. 'We have been forgetting ourselves, and I daresay we are, by this time, put down by not a few of the fair sex as ill-bred bores. Like you, I am an awkward blunderer in the drawing-room; however, if I happen to get beside some sobered dame with no fine daughter to dispose of, I get more natural. It is a fearful loss to us men, woman's inability or unwillingness to converse intelligently on scientific and artistic subjects. The liberalizing of education, however, will, I trust, have a tendency to arouse the female mind generally. It is a mistake, I think, this excluding of all earnest conversation from evening parties. All our amusements or socialities should aim at the elevating and strengthening of our entire nature; but it is a notorious fact that all religious conversation as well as Christian conduct is only for the church, the prayer meeting, or the funeral. The truth is, our national religion has far too much doctrine and formality, and too little soul and sincerity. It appears to me, if we do not change our mode of dealing with drunkenness, poverty, and crime, and reduce our fashionable vices of excesses in eating and drinking, and turn our earnest attention to healthy home policies, and have more enthusiasm for the emancipation of the ignorant and oppressed than for church building and the observance of fast-days, we will soon cease to be a praise and protection, and an example of justice and uprightness in the centre of civilized nations.'

'I admire these remarks,' the other said. 'Major, you have the root of the matter in you. During your life of changing experiences, you must have often been behind the curtains of social and political shams. Like myself, I think, you have a faculty of seeing both sides at once. That is, even in the centre of joyful splendour, you catch the after-feeling of weariness, and with the comical feel the sad. I value your remarks because I know they are founded on stern facts, the outcome of real experience.'

'Ah! I see you would fain bait me in for a critical discussion on our worm-eaten condition as a nation, especially in religion, and our mania for trashy literature,' the Major replied, lifting a glass, and washing down his restrained emotions. 'You must remember, however, that a soldier is expected to be loyal in speech as well as behaviour. It would sound rather comical for one of her Majesty's officers to be heard, at a fashionable party, raising a democratic cry against all our time-honoured customs and imperial prestige. Therefore I need not

apologize to a man like you for exercising caution. I am yet expecting a little promotion in my rank, and as much money as possible, and must hold with the powers that be, whether it be Whig or Tory adventurer. At present, therefore, I am done with all but women and wine; and were all ladies equally gifted with the one we have been speaking of, wine would soon lose all its attractions.'

'You know the world better than I do, Major,' the other said. 'Or rather, I should say you have more effectually caught its spirit. We scribblers are bad at conforming and pandering. The world being our audience, and truth our master, we are ever running against the cherished conceits and opinions of some sect or clique of thinkers. Soldier or no soldier, I believe in a man going right on to promotion and distinction by sheer force of merit and conscientious adherence to noble principle. However, this being anything or everything for a little more of outward success and a larger income, is as much a characteristic of our modern Liberal as our Free Church theologian. With all their devotion to a dead principle, most Tories are more honest at heart than the majority of half-hearted, selfish democrats. However, I have no desire to entangle you into confession of your secret opinions and beliefs, therefore women and wine be it. It would be a pity for any man to dishonour his name by slandering the party who fills his pockets. As you say, were the majority of ladies like Rosa Anderson, the hateful reign of strong drink would soon wane and wax feeble. Why such a full-souled lady can be content to remain shut up with an aged, prejudiced Tory aunt, in the dirty town of W——, is a wonder not a few stagger at. Almost in any position of public life she would take a high place, but I suppose her high sense of duty subordinates all else. She is reported to have refused many splendid offers of marriage, yet I understand she is entirely dependent on her aunt, and the most of the old lady's income dies with her. Unless she comes in for the estate of Justice Anderson, her uncle, I fear she will require to turn a sister of mercy, or live by her pen. There are often many windings from the cradle to the grave, and I daresay, ten or twelve years ago, the idolized child of General Anderson, who spent her sunny girlhood in the enchanting suburbs of the Scottish metropolis, little dreamt of spending the beauty and glory of her days as a lonely orphan on her aunt's bounty. However, like the divine Christ, her meat and drink is to do the will of her Father in heaven. By some complicated fraud or securityship, her father became bankrupt, and died of a broken heart.'

'Good heavens! say no more,' the Major said, wiping his forehead, and feeling as if all strength was leaving him. 'Stop, Dawson, I pray, or you will entirely unman me. My God! can it be that that young lady is Rosa Anderson, the laughing, singing girl I was wont to fondle on my knee? I must be growing old; faces and forms of the departed are before me! scenes of joy and sorrow of the past are rising out of the tomb of buried memories, and the loved and lost are moving to and fro, casting on me looks of mystic meaning. In a moment, I seem standing in a mysterious passage, where two eternities meet and blend in a confluence of yearning tenderness. One eternity is past,

yet ever remaining, the other a present possession, stretching into an immensity of future duration. Shades of those who have excursed into that strange immensity are around me, and I feel I am being criticized by watching spirits; but they are charitable and sympathetic, and I feel drawn far away from the passing and perishing. General Anderson! companion of my youth, and kind adviser when in hot haste I ran into wild excesses, where art thou? Somewhere in God's vast worlds thou art living, and in adoring love unfolding the divine excellences which were blackened and blasted by man's inhumanities. Awful subjection of faith and hope! how mysterious and sad life is after we have loved and lost, and are seeking to see the actual form and hear the voice of Him who is our Creator, and can restore our hopes! I often think suffering and disappointment have made me unjust in my ideas of God, and cruelly cynical towards mankind. Excuse me for giving way to so much personal feeling, but this meeting with my friend's daughter at such a time, and in such a place, is peculiarly strange and arousing. In her arched forehead I see something of the General's expression. She is, however, more after her mother's style of beauty, dreamy and romantic. From what you have told me, I can see she takes from both parents mentally and affectionately. I was out in India at the time of their marriage, and can assure you the General could well afford to offend his patrician relatives by wedding such a rare gem of natural beauty and goodness. Her father was a splendid man. When far from home, in camp life, I often found rare pleasure in renewing my intercourse with him, and often pictured Rosa in the ideal chamber of fond imagination. Somehow, we never cease loving the memory of childhood. When far from home, I have often wondered how it was going with her, and longed to kiss her for her father's sake. Perhaps, after this fitful fever is over, when we have been more perfected through suffering, and dropped this diseased, visible vestment, we will as unexpectedly meet with all our lost ones, radiant with the joy and bloom of perennial life.'





CHAPTER XII.

THE EVENING PARTY.

THE company which had assembled at Sir David's was large and well-selected. As at all such parties, there was, however, much diversity of opinions and beliefs; and during the evening, as opportunity presented, the more argumentative and intellectual enjoyed an exchange of opinion on current topics. Of course, during dinner, the conversation was general—light, tripping, and desultory; every gentleman doing his utmost to be gallant and agreeable, and every lady airing her charms and accomplishments with varying tact and success. When wine and fruit had taken the place of more earnest and heavy feeding, twos and threes—such as the Major and Martin Dawson—indulged in snatches of more earnest conversation. The eating and drinking business seemed common and natural to all, or rather, we would say, supernatural, for it was amazing the quantity of all sorts of viands both sexes devoured. Later in the evening there was a change of programme, and while the ladies prepared for the ball-room, the more elderly gentlemen found their way to the smoking saloon. Sir David was exceedingly fond of the tobacco leaf, and was, as a matter of course, chief of that select company. His pleasure must have partaken of the profound and sublime, for his pale blue eyes shone with ineffable joy as he watched the milky, curling smoke issuing from his well-seasoned meerschaum, and ascending like fragrant incense to invoke his political inspiration. Through and through, Sir David was a leading Tory, but his opinions, after all, were not worth much. Nevertheless, they were highly esteemed by himself, and he had such an overwhelming ambition to shine as a political debater, that he aired his store of ideas whenever the least opportunity presented itself. After all, some of his most intimate friends affirmed that he had not an idea to air, and that the most of his argument worth listening to, like many men's, was simply the current opinions of leading journalists retailed at reduced rate.

'Somehow, Clayton,' he remarked, after aiming a few ill-arranged hits at his guest, 'you and I always clash over politics. Now, however, you must admit that your party is a heterogeneous compound of elements which will never adhere so as to do anything like consistent, progressive work. It appears to me, the less said of your leader the better, for all through his career he has changed colour and complexion

with every flood-tide of public fanaticism. It is my opinion, before he makes his exit, he will strive for some great revolution in land law, become the high-priest of Ireland, and finish up by becoming a raving apostle of some new religion, more material than Swedenborg's heaven of sexual love, and more ritual and absurd than Comte's mystic adoration and enshrining of ideal saints. The disestablishing of the Irish Church is simply the first move in the severing of all Church and State connection. Of course, I don't pretend to say we of the Opposition have a man exactly true to his colours; and I believe an intelligent foreigner would tell us we have simply two demagogues of monstrous ambition,—the one seeking to be king imperial, and the other, as the assumed friend of the people, striving for a democratic presidency. I would not presume to endorse such opinions; but in regard to your leader, it is evident he neglects all consistent foreign policy, that he may devote his entire energies to the educating of the nation for an intelligent, strongly-organized democracy. It is amusing, and some are mad enough to affirm, that in the course of fifty years or so we will be under democratic rule, with Ireland nestling by our side, with equal laws and liberties, and equal prosperity and contentment. All that sounds very well, but the imperial, upper House of Lords don't intend giving way until the mob come right up and pelt them out. The disestablishing of the national Church is another mob mania he is giving secret countenance to. However, he will by and by discover that he is drifting into complexities too vague and fanciful, and the very crowd he is endeavouring to educate, will quietly hand him over to indulge his vagaries in private. Once, however, we have another innings, we will maintain the national prestige in a different manner, fearlessly extending our interests and influence abroad.'

'My dear Haddington, you run off at a fearful rate,' Clayton replied. 'The truth is, I am appalled at your comprehensive criticism, and am rather pleased with your prophecy in regard to Britain's great statesman. Should he turn, as you predict, an apostle of religion, he will only the more fully exhibit the greatness of his wonderful powers. A new religion, however, he will not seek to reveal or promulgate, simply because he knows the religion of humanity has been in the world from all time. Only he is endeavouring by his great work to enable the people generally to realize the unity of true religion underlying all outward form and differences of opinion in regard to church government and such like. Like the founder of Christianity, our leader is striving, in all legislative reformation, to throw the mind and soul of mankind outside all mere form and party conceits back upon self-reliance and simple belief in, and filial obedience to, the fatherhood of God. Further, I think you are not far wrong when you say he is educating the nation for an intelligent and strong democracy. At least I, for one, am working for such. When I hear a German statesman on the one hand—in these times of enlightened reason—maintaining with all the strength of learning and the advantages of position, that war will ever remain as one of the fine arts, strengthening and refining some of the noblest of our virtues; and, on the other, a French democrat believing that for many years to come, even with Republican

government, the sword must cut through international differences and revenge old sores, I confess I grow impatient and disgusted, and feel, if we are to continue the greatest nation of liberty and justice, we must take the lead in insisting on an international government for the peaceable settlement of all foreign disputes. Right is mightier far than brute might, and war is such a childish, barbarous thing, that men in our times should spew it out of their mouth. In regard to Ireland, one thing is evident, that cruelly-wronged portion of our nation needs a high-priest touched with a fellow-feeling of her oppressions. Do you know, I have a peculiar admiration for that frank, impulsive, enthusiast race; and it will be to our everlasting disgrace if we do not, before long, restore its Edenic beauty. If the Irish people generally are far behind us in industrial enterprise and intelligent understanding of profitable farming and stock-rearing, we must remember they have not the same inducements to make the land fertile and productive. With better land laws, we should set about endowing and organizing scientific schools for the diffusing of sound general knowledge on commercial and industrial economy. In a word, I consider that Ireland has simply to get a fair opportunity, and, like all other divisions of civilized countries, it will gradually work out its own salvation. Of course, the national Church will be disestablished in good time, but seeing it harms so few, and is a fertile fountain of good to many, there is no need to press it to the front. When all is said and done, political science is but a very limited thing; and religion being infinite, and above the mere code of law, should live and thrive outside all State protection or support. It may be said that the State Church gives to many who are unable to pay for religion an opportunity of all the blessings and privileges of church ordinances. Granted; and that is certainly a blessing, provided the religion be pure and undefiled; but when we find it is a system of reformed or revised Judaism, which even dares to measure parliamentary qualifications by its conscriptions and creeds, we venture to think the poor and ignorant might grow more speedily and truly religious and enlightened without its fostering care. There is a great howl and cry about church property, but I do not think we will find much difficulty in making a more national and universal good of the Church's land. Both in town and country the working classes need improved dwelling-houses, and there is abundance of ignorance to be educated. However, on this, as on all other public questions, there will be diversity of opinion, and after all sides have had their say, I believe the church-property question will be disposed of in a way to satisfy all unbiased minds. Like you, I believe our leader will live to introduce some splendid revolution of land law both for Ireland and the two other sister portions of our nation; and when Ireland is free from pope and landlord slavery, and our monster entail law and perpetual pensions are swept away, he, the friend of the people, and the great champion, may rest in peace, and the sweet aroma of his memory will smell like lilies and roses while time lasts.'

'I will not pretend to follow you in your vague generalization, and absurd admiration for your lion,' Haddington replied. 'However, I know your creed and text is free trade, free religion, free everything;

free exchange of labour and reward, and free import and export between all nations. And I grant all that sounds very fine, and one feels, listening to such fanciful imaginings, that we are nearing Utopian times, when every one shall have a fig-tree to sit under, as well as full liberty of conscience to worship any god, or none at all. I am humane enough to wish such a state of affairs possible and practicable. But where shall we set about finding the material, the society, or the party capable of such noble endeavour? Not certainly in the combustible bundle called Liberalism. Even in church matters, not two of you are agreed on the building of a chapel, the calling of a minister, the doctrine of everlasting punishment, or the immortality of the soul, let alone the governing of a nation in righteousness and progressive amity.

'If Liberalism be as you say,' Clayton said, 'very imperfectly represented by the majority of its adherents in these times, that does not in the least take from the merits, virtues, and power of the principle. Of course, there is at present a popular cry for more union in the Liberal camp. Nevertheless, it appears to me more essential to have more real liberal education than bigoted organizing. We are simply growing. Only I would have all parties in times of general elections not to split over mere fractional differences, but to be careful to throw the full force of unity in supporting the central principles of general good. Union, like every other manifestation of principle, is many sided, and real union does not consist in a majority seeing eye to eye on all subjects and measures, but in united effort in upholding a centre of righteousness. I remember, when the last lock-out took place in L——, of meeting a sad-looking factory girl on her way to a great trades union meeting. "Hallo, Kate!" I said, "I thought you had more sense than be among the rioting unionists." "I'm no' a rioting unionist, sir," she said, "but am just going forward to give right a bit lift; and it's no right that wives and children should starve for mere master's ability to resist a principle of justice." So I think the factory girl had some idea of true union, while she repudiated all the evils of mere party dogmatism. Do you know, Haddington, I would not be a Tory even for a kingdom; and it appears to me the time is already on the wing when true, progressive Liberalism will accomplish much of what you call Utopian dreams. The principle of life in all nature is for ever renewing its outward manifestations, but alas! Toryism, alike in Church and State, remains dormant and benumbed. Over-fed with ease and luxury, it cannot lift its heavy head to respond to the inflowing influence of the Divine Spirit, but swaddled in its bandages of original sin and actual transgression, it goes on muttering its illogical confessions, and unrolling its moth-eaten conscriptions.'

'It is all very fine this investing of Liberalism with your own transcendent idealism,' Sir David replied. 'Of course, I can see, like not a few of our principals, who are simply thieves and robbers, pocketing money for pulling down the very system they are paid to uphold, you believe in the infinitude of the human mind, and refuse to set limits to its powers or possible attainments. However, I tell you honestly, I don't believe anything of the kind. I hold that a man has just as limited a position as a horse. To a certain prime state he can grow both physically and mentally, but no farther; and God, knowing this, and willing some

of humanity should be saved from evil, has provided a sacrifice ; and if you Liberals will clamour for atheists to be admitted into Parliament, you will soon see that your vaunted progression, from one degree of moral and religious excellence, will be a return of the dark days of godless cruelty. In the words of Scripture, Woe, woe to the people who have no prophet, and whose children grope in darkness, and sit in the valley of the shadow of death !'

'Better far a humanity-worshipping atheist for a lawgiver, than a sensual better on a race-course,' Clayton remarked. 'Honest sceptics do good service ; and it is only the fool that says there is no God. The sceptic can do real good work by hammering at bigotry, and all forms of narrow theological beliefs, and the pharisaism of mere churchism ; but he or she may as well attempt to chip a bit off the sun with their physical hands, as imagine they can in the least interfere with God's nature or attributes. Neither can their withering contempt of all theological dogmas lessen in one degree the value and inherent immortality of true religion. You orthodox thinkers worship God as incarnated in one man, the man Jesus ; the atheist worships Him in universal man or humanity. Which is most holy, the God-man or the God-men believer ? You say the atheist puts God aside ; nay, he simply puts the name aside, and for God puts cause ; and if he refuse to worship or serve either God or cause, he worships the humanity which evolved from cause ; and thus, it may be unconsciously, worships the Father in the Son. I deny that there is the least likeness between a horse's perfection and that of a man. The horse, like all other animals, is simply where it was from the first. But we have on every side indisputable evidence that man is a creature of infinite power, and every advancing epoch more and more prostrates the mind before its own innate grandeur. Much even our grandfathers considered impossible, much they not even dreamed of, are realized results ; and the very fact that, in advance of all that now is, we have not a few pioneering in a still grander time of freedom from myriad forms of human-imposed curses, proclaims with no uncertain sound that man is a mystery, deep, grand, and mysterious as God Himself.'

'All over it's a strange affair ; one says we have come from God, another from a monkey, and a third from some slime called, for mystery's sake, protoplasm,' Sir David said. 'However, I will not attempt denying that we live in wonderful times, and it may be science in the future will bring other planets as near as we now bring distant nations. Nevertheless, when you stigmatize Toryism as a stagnant pool or disease-engendering moat, I simply say, a burst of abuse is no argument. Characterize us as you may, Conservatism is of old and from the Lord, and according to His will kings reign and princes decree justice. Through all ages we find that the people who rebelled against dynastic authority were visited with national disgrace, war, and famine. So it is now, to a degree, and worse will follow so long as silly crowds listen with strained ears and prejudiced minds to the trashy effusions of Radical spouters, whose daring fanaticism, or, I might say, ignorant arrogance, seeks to equalize society, and bring to nought the noble aristocracy which is the backbone and glory of a nation.'

'We shall not fall out, Sir David,' Clayton remarked. 'If you please

to wax hot in defence of your party, and believe in its heaven-appointed authority, that is your business. We are not contending over personalities, but for public good. So far, you and I might retire, and let the world fight out its tragic contest with truth and falsehood. But every man worthy the name, be he noble or commoner, is duty bound to bear witness for the truth, and in some way aid in the emancipation of the oppressed. It is not mere names or parties we are fighting for, but principles; and in calling me a Liberal or Radical you do not explain or define my character or principles, but merely indicate something I am endeavouring to manifest. In heart I may be as different from Liberalism as now believed in and understood, as day is from night. Nevertheless, I call myself Liberal because it seems to me the best word whereby to express generosity, charity, and beneficence; and I consider it is right and proper to be charitable, generous, and beneficent, because these excellences and attributes are the most beautiful, as well as the fittest to bring about a higher degree of civilisation, and because I believe there is in every individual, even the most depraved, appreciation of these excellences, and a desire and ability to rise up towards such. I am not one, however, who believes in sudden tides of reformation. On the contrary, I know that human progress towards the good and beautiful is slow, hard work. Nevertheless, each inflow of enlightenment, as well as every defeat and victory, will the more explain how we may successfully grapple with poverty, and chase away drunkenness, ignorance, and all forms of horrid disease engendered by filth and ignorance of the laws of health,—disease which comes as sanitary detectives, compelling us to believe we have fallen into grievous errors, and that there is no way to a diviner and purer life save by the narrow, strait way of self-help and self-culture, and obedience to the highest good,—disease which tells with fearful emphasis that we are equal in mortality and corruption, if not in conceits, selfishness, and physical possessions.'

'I confess I have little sympathy with philosophic definition of terms,' Haddington said. 'When you advert, however, to drunkenness, house-building, poverty, and such like national, seen, and understood evils, I grant there is much need for reform in these directions. The truth is, many of our enduring workmen and women are huddled together in hovels which forbid alike all comfort and decency,—in fact, I would not shelter my horses in such disease-engendering dens. If you lordly manufacturers were less selfish in profits off your employés, and liberal in action as well as word, you might shame us landed proprietors into giving up some of our uncultivated land. It is Liberalism in actions and deeds, and not in theory or fine definition of terms, that I believe in and understand. Everything fails but a noble example; therefore give your children's children something better to thank you for than beautiful, philosophic ideas. Even, as you say, atheism cannot sweep away the immortal redemption of Christ's unselfish life. Let every wealthy employer invest his increasing wealth in building homes, not mere speculation, slipshod, hampered tenements, for their employés, and we landed sirs will feel you are Liberal indeed.'

'I am glad to hear you expressing such sentiments,' Clayton said.

'Deeds, and only deeds, make us mean or noble. I know it is a notorious fact that many Liberals are more unjust and arrogant, as well as far more extravagant in sensual excesses, than thousands of consistent Conservatives. As a nation we have a fair exterior, but we abound in hypocrisy and ignorance. In Lancashire alone, the sad condition of thousands of mere boys and girls is heartrending. It is a sad mockery to our front of wealth and artistic refinement to see these mere children driven out to work in the fields from morning till evening, with no free, laughing childhood, no innocent, refined youth and maidenhood, and almost as ignorant as the beasts that perish. Of course, now our school boards will compel a certain amount of education. Nevertheless, until the condition of the parents is considerably improved, and some reasonable, moral, and consistent remedy thought out and adopted for regulating our too rapid increase of population, there will be poor prospects for the majority of the children of the poor. I do not know how it is with others, but with me the sight of our thronged streets in the evening is horribly suggestive. Faces keen and pinched with hunger,—faces sullen and dogged, desponding, wicked, and dangerous, lustful, sensual, and terrible,—and voices of men profane and drunken, and of women filthy and cruel, and of old, old children, old with care, old with sorrow and starvation! O my God! what a sight for a nation that worships Jesus as Lord! Often I ask, What will all this come to if we go on as we are doing?'

'Now you are coming round our way, now you are rational and can be understood,' Sir David said. 'It is a sad fact, the people need a deliverer, but they will look in vain to the Liberal ranks. The truth is, you have few really learned men among you. If your leader was once over to the great majority, you have not another man capable of holding you together. With us, however, it is entirely different, and the very name of our chief, so famed in literature, so unbending in will, so majestic in ambition and self-reliance, is a potent spell. Whatever you may think, there is a great Tory reaction, and I know our mode of government will yet be the universal choice of the people.'

'The emancipated human mind will yet throw off Toryism and all imperial moonshine as mere childish toys of its babyhood,' Clayton replied. 'I do not wish to dash the prospective glory of your hopes, and I for one would not regret that you should have yet another term of power before you. If the people will hamper as they are doing the brave and complicated work of a statesman such as our leader, they deserve to feel the full force of Tory mismanagement and wanton contempt of everything save its own mad adventures or dreams of imperial prerogative. However, in the past, Tory government did much real good, and we heartily recognise such, and feel our position to-day is better alike for its triumphs and failures. Every advance of time, however, takes from the power of Conservatism, and were it not for the dogmatic enthusiasm of a few, and the blind ignorance and silly prejudice of many, it is entirely out of date, and, like the doctrinal absurdities of Christianity, ready to be shelved as a relic for the antiquarian. In regard to your leader, the less said of him the better, and the worst judgment I can wish upon him is that he may live to

hold himself up to the contempt of the many, as he now does to all who can see beneath the disguise of words and vain pretence. The truth is, whatever others may think, I consider him a mere reckless adventurer, pandering and plotting for fame and position, using men and circumstances as a tradesman does his tools for the execution of a piece of workmanship. Justice, honesty, and righteousness are terms he knows nothing of, and the gruesome voices of the poor of our great cities as they wander to and fro half-moaning, half-menacing, are sweetest melody to his seared, unscrupulous soul. So far he has planned and succeeded as few can plan and succeed, for by vast concentration of selfish will and overweening ambition, he has conserved, not a party or a principle, but simply a man who has subordinated his higher nature to a ruling passion of self-glorification and self-exaltation. Your leader is no king-man, swayed by noble impulses and animated by a grand enthusiasm, but simply a clever juggler, a tricky cardplayer, as far from being true and honest as light is from darkness. As a man of letters, he is but sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. True, he is an artist in composition, and subtle and gorgeous in language, but barren and feeble in thought. He can paint a picture of scenery, and play with the selfish passions of the human heart, but he has no message worth reporting, no gospel for the weary and oppressed, no science for the student, no morality for the philanthropist, no deep, poetic yearning with the inner soul of nature, nothing save his own conceits, and aims, and ways of seeing and reporting a few expressions of life. As a man of letters he has written his name in water, and, like his mouldering dust, his novels will soon be among the passing and perishing; and should fate give him another term of political authority, I fear, as a politician, he will re-act more reckless adventure, and write his hated name in blood and universal derision. There is, however, compensation for all seeming loss, just reward according to the measure of work done. As we sow, we reap, and your leader has lived, acted, and written for a moment's passing reward. For the present day, for the luxury and ambition of this life, he has toiled and laboured with determined purpose, and his reward will be accordingly. To-day the popular cry seems the great judgment-seat, the final rewarder or condemner; but time grinds slow and sure, and burns out all save the pure wheat. In his day he has found honour, exaltation, and reward, and his mouldering dust need not complain if after ages bury his memory and his deeds with righteous execrations. Nothing save that which in some way or other touches the inner heart of humanity in its holy sorrows and noble aspiration after good, finds on earth immortality. With all its error, selfishness, and vanity, the human soul is still capable of knowing the voice of a redeemer. True, it too often puts them to death with reproach and opposition; but their spirit cannot rest in the grave nor their memory see corruption, but, part and parcel of the great family in earth and heaven, they live alike in active work and calm repose.

'Hear, hear!' exclaimed a tall, slender man, springing from a well-worn lounge on which he had been reclining, listening intently to every word of Clayton and Haddington's conversation. 'Well spoken, Clayton!

But excuse this rude abruptness of mine. Your last remarks are the speech of the evening. It warms my blood and animates my lagging enthusiasm to listen to such plain, honest truths. As a nation, we sadly want a few hundreds of men and women sufficiently brave and noble to stand up for the right and true. The truth is, Clayton, I have wafted your last speech to heaven as sweetest incense, earnestly invoking for it the 'amen' of the *upper house* of liberal, noble men.'

Grasping Clayton still more firmly by the hand, and shaking it rather unconventionally, the enthusiast continued, 'I know you will set me down for an incoherent zealot; but when great ideas stir my emotions, when I feel the fire and sympathy of another earnest soul fanning my slumbering faculties and entwining my sensibilities, when I realize the mystic touch of brotherhood, the affinity of kindred spirits, I forget everything and everybody, and feeling and thought speak and act in their own way. I am a wearied, solitary, half-completed possibility, and the welcome voice of kindred reciprocity has warmed my entire being, and I am all ablaze with mystic emotion. New life is breeding within my life, and an oversoul is gazing on in rapt wonder. I am so full of undefinable ecstasy that I must laugh, cheer, and weep, or this infinite pressure of aroused emotion will sever soul and body, and send me in an undignified mood into the fuller blaze of unveiled truth. Stare, cynic, laugh and sneer if you please! Miserable dupe of opium or whisky, gaze with diseased powers and seared indifference at my mad ecstasy, for I know you are strangers to the blissful feeling of holy emotion. Ah! a noble idea, a fixed purpose of good and spiritual and mental reciprocity are the almighty stimulants of a healthy life. Mystical, magical powers! you are melting me like heated wax, and making me whirl and reel like a speck of etherized vapour. This grand experience annihilates death, makes me lay down my life a thousand times, and feel in all that I am one with God in love, sympathy, and serene repose.'

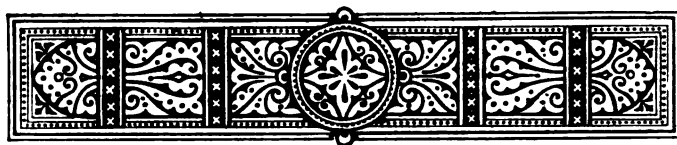
Opening wide his large, pensive eyes, the time-worn young man cheered and hurrahed as if welcoming some approaching procession of glorious victors. Still grasping Clayton's hand, he again begged to be excused for his abrupt display of feeling, saying, 'No man knows better than I do that all expression of passionate feeling is regarded by fashionable society as an unmistakeable evidence of vulgarity and low birth.'

'It is all right, Dawson; go on,' Clayton said. 'We are in a smoking saloon just now, and such is the most radical and equalizing of haunts outside the gin shop. In the drawing-room you might have been spotted as a sort of disgrace to your craft, which, by the bye, is more characterized by philosophy and common sense than noble enthusiasm for a cause or a principle. I admire real earnestness in every one. Although I am neither poet nor philosophic essayist, and without the trying experience of a public favourite, kicked the one day by narrow-minded critics, and the next flattered by admirers, I can deeply sympathize with overcharged nature finding relief, and I know something of the burning enthusiasm of a fixed purpose. I admire nature in all its manifestations and expressions, and if we could get beyond the

conventional in art into its poetry, which is inspiration, we would find nature can never be inartistic. As you say, much expression of joy or sorrow is considered vulgar, and tears a weakness; but I would rather be a Christ, weeping with the sad, and making the water of everyday toil into wine, than a modern gentleman.'

'Hurrah, hurrah!' the tall, pale man again exclaimed; 'hear, O Heaven! I have at last heard in a lordly mansion of modern luxury the clear-ringing voice, and grasped the warm hand, of a true, tender-hearted, honest man. Spiritualized Milton, Shakespeare, Socrates, Homer, Burns, and all the mighty host of past and present great ones, who for a time groaned and suffered to raise humanity nearer to God and goodness!—spirits of the noble and true, who yet linger in love over our weltering human misery!—behold me, a fellow-labourer, toil-worn and sad, following in your footprints, now weeping and groaning with bleeding wounds, and again carried up into a mount of rapt transfiguration, as I am just now, and prostrating my whole nature before the grandest and holiest altar of God's Spirit—the altar of a noble, honest man.'





CHAPTER XIII.

THE BALL-ROOM.

THE poet's oration was suddenly cut short by the entrance of a deputation from the ladies, stating they were ready to be conducted to the ball-room. Clayton did not, however, lose the opportunity of inviting Dawson to his house as a welcome visitor, and hoped they would be fast friends. Dawson cordially reciprocated all Clayton's friendly sentiments, and was glad of the promised opportunity of knowing more of his riches of mind in regard to political science. Sir David was not sorry that the end of discussion had come. Although he uttered a few hurried statements, indicating that he repudiated all that Clayton had advanced in condemnation of his leader, he felt it no easy matter finding force of argument and material proof to establish an opposite conclusion. Dawson's abrupt interference was a splendid peg for Sir David, and he did not fail to use it in self-protection, and earnestly impressed Clayton that if time and opportunity had but permitted, he would have found no difficulty in convincing the latter of his error and most unchristian-like conduct in thus throwing overboard a man of such universal esteem and undoubted greatness.

We need scarcely say that, to a man, the company forsook the smoking saloon, and not many minutes passed before they were whirling round and round in harmony with exquisite music and graceful motion. Gaily inhaling sweetest perfume, and feasting on love and beauty, they whirled and bowed and embraced until lost in the repose of luxurious bliss. Then for a moment they forgot the inanity of the grave, the pangs of remorse, the sadness of death, the agony of separation, the chills of disappointment, and all social and political confusion, and were happy and all of one mind :

'Bobbing around, around, around,
All were bobbing around.'

Rosa, of course, was in the ball-room, but somehow did not feel inclined for joining in the first dance. With her peculiar faculty of seeing the sad alongside of the gay and brilliant, she was seated alone, and feeling somewhat isolated in thought and feeling. Surely it was not essential always to be philosophic and moralizing ; so she argued, and began lecturing herself into a sort of slavish oneness with the spirit

of the place. In appearance, at least, she might ; and while preparing to float with the tide, Earl Fairly, a wealthy noble well on for seventy, approached, and after the usual complimentary greetings, begged of her to allow him to lead her to a more retired corner of the hall, so that they might enjoy a moment of undisturbed conversation. It was evident they had met before, and that more than once, and that some understanding of love or friendship existed between them. The Earl was all smiles and bland graciousness, not unmixed with blushing confusion and nervous uncertainty, and it appeared as if a look of utter contempt was striving for the mastery over the characteristic beneficence and tenderness of Rosa's expression.

'Ah, my darling, you can be scornful if you please, and I will be patient and hopeful,' the Earl said. 'Now I have so completely criticized my entire feelings in regard to you, I can endure everything save defeat. I am fully aware that I have been importunate in pressing my suit long after you hinted that all conjugal feeling toward me was impossible. A love, however, such as mine for you, which can bear scorn and cool indifference, is worth something. Would, dearest Rosa, I could think you cold, cruel, and indifferent, and I would find it easy to tear out my mad passion for you ! On the contrary, I know that you are all through and through pitiful and tender, reverent and respectful, and your pity is more precious to me than the love of all other women. Bear with me, for I see you are impatient, and I will try to be more calm and dignified.'

'I am glad you have given me once more an opportunity of affirming what I wrote to you,' she said in hurried tones ; 'and I cannot further listen to such sentiment. I do respect every man's love ; but I tell you, for me to listen to your personal confessions is unwomanly and insincere, because I can never in the least reciprocate such feelings, and I do trust you will now let the subject drop. I offered you friendship, and all that woman can do for a man in enabling him to be noble and do his duty as a member of society. More I cannot ; and if you feel it better to hate me than accept my terms, I bow to your decision.'

'At present I cannot accept any terms outside the ruling passion of my soul,' he said. 'You seem so far removed from ordinary ladies, sweet Rosa, that I wonder you are found in any blaze of finery and fashion, and especially in a ball-room. Before we are obliged to part, for I can see your friend Martin Dawson is evidently impatient to see you disengaged, I am to extort a promise from you. Say, darling, that you will dance with me ; it will so annoy the Misses Haddington. Will you, best and noblest of women ? Do say you will dance with me, and I shall cherish the blissful memory all through life.'

'What a stupid fool you are, Earl,' she replied, with an intense feeling of sadness. 'I certainly shall dance with you, but I cannot see why you should care to cherish such an absurd memory.'

'You speak in a very cold, abstract manner,' he said. 'But I suppose, like most beautiful, gifted women, you are severe and exacting, demanding a homage almost too great and exclusive for a poor ordinary mortal to bestow. I thank you very much for your generous

promise to dance with me, but you might not make it such a matter of supreme indifference. Strange I take all humiliation from you as a matter of course. Now that you have said you will do me that favour, I feel as if I could throw wealth and position to the corners of the earth, for the one joy of feeling you leaning on my arm, to listen to your heart beating against my bosom, and to kiss the flush of your matchless beauty, rendered doubly lovely by the animation of graceful motion.'

'I admire your poetic eloquence, Earl,' she said, 'and, with all my icy coldness, no one loves pleasant speeches better. I like the inspiring idea, however, to be worthy of poetic language and the sweat of aroused feeling. According to my way of thinking, the pleasure of dancing is about the only emotion I would advise all sensible men to cast out of their remembrance. If you wish to cherish my memory, associate it with something more rational and beautiful. I do not see, however, why you should wonder to see me here, or at any other assembly of finery and fashion. A really self-reliant, upright soul can be holy and happy in hell. Those, however, who are not morally and mentally free—that is, those who are not sufficiently strong for any place, position, influence, or temptation, must, or at least should, choose safe company, and keep away from amusements which tend to take from them a love for and vigour to overtake honest, real, everyday work. Although I have no love whatever for dancing, I do not say balls are in themselves evils, but they certainly afford congenial opportunities for spreading and increasing many forms of sensual evils. Every one knows dancing is a healthful exercise if indulged in moderately, and not extended, as at balls, until weariness and exhaustion, as well as hurtful want of sleep, are the result. However, as I said, let all amusement-lovers be fully convinced in their own mind. If we are firmer to endure temptation, more cheerful under difficulties, more active in labour, more heroic in self-denial, and all over raised in the pure and beautiful after nights in ball-rooms, or evenings in theatres or operas, it is good to encourage such. If, on the other hand, we find we have wasted time, and taken up precious days in preparation, that, after these brilliant or exciting scenes, we are so far unnerved and filled with vain longings and morbid fancies, and find the dull pressure of everyday work more unbearable, the sooner we have said farewell to the siren gates of popular amusements the better. Somehow, I think, when the soul is in a healthy state, it has a perennial source of enjoyment within itself. To me change of work or study is the tree of life in the midst of surrounding death. Of course, want of education makes the man or woman more dependent on that which is without. However, we shall hope a love of scientific and artistic studies will by and by render the cry for more mere amusement more feeble and unnecessary.

'Rosa, you are wise beyond your day and generation,' the Earl said, dashing aside a falling tear. 'It is, I suppose, another sign of our uncommon times to hear a young lady moralizing like a sage. The truth is, your powers are so cultivated that I believe you find a moral or a poem in every atom of matter. However, I never weary listening to you, because there is an earnestness and freshness about all you do

and say. Perhaps I am weak in my importunity, but every word you utter rivets my chains, and makes me more and more your slave. Now I fully understand why we love one woman more than another, and how a lady of your beauty and mental excellence can command the homage of hundreds. Even had your social position been less exalted, your rare genius would have raised you to the front, and crowned you queen of women. Many ladies can be found with bewitching curls, fine figures, and beautiful faces; but few, very few, have a heart beating in sympathy with all hearts, and a soul thrilled with the wealth and harmony of poetry and love. Rosa, I bow in reverent adoration before you, and listen with awe as you grapple with all kinds of mental error and bigotry, and bring beauty and order out of moral depravity and bewildering confusion; and with a natural calm, which bathes the soul in hopeful repose, you soar with serene majesty among the immensities of the unseen and spiritual, and enter into the very bosom of God, and bring Him near as a tender father to the orphaned soul of humanity.'

'Dear Earl, I am glad you understand and appreciate my mind and motives,' she said; 'and could I make you understand how useless it is for you to speak of love to me, we might be mutual, helping friends. I never attempt to hide the fact that God has given me a mind of more than ordinary compass; or I would be nearer the truth, perhaps, were I to say I have used ordinary powers common to all, and that my distinction lies not in special endowment, but in being faithful, and making each talent double itself. Could mankind be made to know true wisdom, it is as easy being good and great as mean and evil. You praise my greatness in no measured terms, yet what do I know compared to what I am ignorant of? Like all who enter the Gate Beautiful that leads to eternal life, I feel I have simply picked up a little gold dust, while the great heart of God is unsounded and misunderstood. I wish I could tell you what I feel and mean; but our language, like our lives, is poor and barren when we attempt to explain the inner soul of the universe. I am often called mystic, sceptic, and Utopian dreamer, but these terms in no way take from the reality of my faith and experiences. The man or woman carried captive by popular opinions and tastes cannot understand that there is nothing vague or incomprehensible to the vision of a spiritual soul in sympathy with the Author of life; that to the student of nature all is beauty, utility, and harmony; that it is His temple, His friend, His divine revelation, written within and without with the soul of love, love, and still more love: and we make the pious Bible-worshipper aghast with indignation if we even hint that death is no curse or incomprehensible mystery, but a beautiful necessity, and that the pain, the horror, and terror of death are fears and phantoms of our ignorance and some of the evils of orthodox theology. We speak of God, sing of Him, and build churches in His honour, but we are afraid to let our love plume wing and nestle in His bosom, and His great father's heart is aching for some human letter-carrier to bear His gospel anew to earth.'

'To you, loveliest of women, it is given to know much hidden from us ordinary mortals,' the Earl said, moving nearer and nearer to his fair companion, whose countenance shone with spiritual beauty. Ven-

turing to take hold of her finely-shaped hand, he pressed it passionately to his lips. 'Do not, Rosa darling, shrink from me in that freezing-like manner. I know I am beneath you in every respect, yet I am a man, sorry for my past follies, eager to be good and do good; and all my vast wealth I lay at your feet, to be used as you think proper. Forgive me if I have offended you in daring to kiss the hand I long to claim as mine, and believe I did so with a reverence an angel might respect.'

Rosa was vexed and pained. Only misunderstanding and blundering would be the result of more conversation, and assuring the Earl that she cherished nought save a friendly feeling towards him, she moved forward to meet Martin Dawson, who by this time was bowing and smiling, as he advanced with a military gentleman well up in life on his arm.

'Heaven cannot so bless me,' the Earl muttered, as he retired to blow a cloud and cool himself in the garden. 'The good God I have so despised will not give me such a woman after I have so shamefully preyed on the weaker virtue of many as precious, if less gifted and noble. However, I have yet sufficient manliness to pluck out this doting passion, and give cooler attention to some less scrupulous lady. It is now late in life with me, and I must marry, or my estate and wealth will pass to strangers, and my name be blotted out of the roll of peers. Of course, I can get fifty lovely ladies if I choose. Money can do everything but purchase love and the repose of contentment. Good God! I am heartily sick of all this humbug. Would I could attain to a diviner life than the enthusiasm and excitement of horse-racing, ball-room, and drunken debauch. Without my money, what am I? Something I do not care to define. I feel such a woman as Rosa would complete my life and rebuild my unholy ruin. I have found out the secret of true wisdom when it is too late. The prize beyond all prizes, the highest joy and best blessing man can gain, has eluded my grasp, and my heart is cold and dead, and my soul soured and cynical as an arch-fiend's.'





CHAPTER XIV.

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

HAVE you at length succeeded in freeing yourself from that importunate old fool?' Martin Dawson said, cordially greeting Rosa; and in a few well-chosen words introduced Major Wray as an old and esteemed friend of her departed sire. Bowing with true military dignity, the handsome Major took her offered hand; and his eyes filled as he reverently raised it to his lips. Neither had spoken, and repressing a flood of aroused memories, the Major said:

'I am indeed all, and more than your friend has said. In the truest sense of the term, your honourable father and humble servant were friends; and I trust his daughter will recognise me as an old acquaintance.'

Rosa gazed inquiringly into the intelligent face, on which sad feeling had left deep traces of disappointment and weariness. Still her hand lingered in his; and the warm clasp told how much each felt, and that these feelings were far too real and deep for expression. Rosa strove to shape a reply, and still regarding him with wondering admiration, her lovely eyes spoke all she could command of verbal expression.

'I do not wonder at your look of puzzled inquiry,' the Major remarked. 'The fleeting impressions of youth soon vanish; and I am a changed, haggard man compared to the young gent who frequented the home of your childhood. You do indeed make me feel old; yet it seems but yesterday since I fondled you on my knee. Now you stand before me in matured womanly beauty, and the deepest charm of intellectual greatness is stamped on every feature of your pensive face. I never thought I was so vain until the present moment, as I have hitherto been counting on classing myself among lady-killing bachelors. Now, however, I admit I must be on the shady side of life.'

'Nay, Major,' she said; 'I would prefer to say you are nearing the summit of eternal youth. My silence must be very chilling to an old acquaintance, but I do feel unequal for this unexpected meeting. Do excuse me, pray; for the very mention of your name called up a crowd of fond memories—I might say, buried memories. At first the faces and forms seemed strange and far distant, moving to and fro like misty clouds. Now they are nearing, and becoming intensely familiar; and I see in your time-saddened face the intimate friend and companion of

my dear father. Strange how a voice or a face annihilates time, and launches us into a far-receded past, and renders the past a present, perennial reality, imperishable as our nature! When I think on the time and circumstances under which we then met, I can scarcely refrain from falling on your breast, and sobbing out aroused emotion. This, however, is not exactly the place for expression of anything save conformity to what is called good manners.'

'Could anything be more natural, beautiful, and akin to spotless innocence?' the Major thought, lost in a whirl of pleased emotion.

Martin Dawson soon saw and heard sufficient to convince him a third party was for a time an unnecessary as well as an undesirable complement, and, with characteristic abruptness, he moved off and mixed among the brilliant throng.

'Your welcome is as sweet and refreshing as it is calm and sincere,' the Major remarked. 'Truly, as you say, this is not the place one would choose for much expression of sacred regard. Somehow I seem to feel that, like myself, you have strong inclinations for the solitary and secluded. It may appear a great liberty, but if you have the least inclination, we might go out in the garden for a few minutes, and smell the refreshing sweetness of shrubs and flowers, and converse a little on the luxury of this unexpected meeting. In my case particularly, your presence rolls back the flight of time; and I feel as if I was, as of yore, within your father's hall, listening to his rich, swelling voice, and his even flow of gorgeous language, discoursing on the mysteries of time and eternity. His was truly an inviting, reassuring countenance. Even a perfect stranger felt completely at home the moment he heard his welcome; for his patrician features were always lit up with a beaming smile of beneficent sociality.'

'I am glad you have suggested going out,' Rosa said, 'as I am longing to escape for a short time from this benumbing whirl of fairy splendour. I conclude I am a rude Hindoo gipsy, for I always feel overcome of sadness in gay scenes; and you are perfectly right in concluding I love the solitary and secluded. I fear my love is selfishness, from the fact that nature affords me rare enjoyment. The spirit of Christianity forbids us always to be seeking the highest good for self. Would I could tell you how I revel in nature! When I am alone in unfrequented shades, wandering among flowery dales and by rippling streams, sin, death, suffering, and all that we know by misery, seem impossible. Therefore, dear Major, let us haste to the garden; it will be a delightful change to walk among the brown leaves of autumn, listening to sighing winds, pent up with the joys and sorrows of humanity's complex experiences, and to converse on kindred topics beneath the pale light of the mystic moon. Calm, majestic mother Nature is ever a tender soother of all my unrest, ever an intuitive sympathizer and instructor. It seems at once to understand we are a sort of orphans, and labours with myriad eloquent tongues to make us realize we are in a fatherland, and marching on toward a parent's heart and home—that before us is the Gate Beautiful, the resurrection life of completer compass.'

The night air was rather chilly; for an October moon shone over the

shorn fields, and the withering breeze was searing all green foliage, and the falling leaves were covering the gravel walks with the annual decay of vegetable life. In a word, it was a night for romance, for poetic inspiration, and mystic musing on the mystery of life and the glory and beauty of the garment of pervading Deity.

'I am, of course, presuming a great deal on old acquaintance,' the Major said, wrapping his fair companion in her fur mantle, and drawing her arm into his. 'Such being the case, I trust you will excuse all seeming familiarity, and believe I only cherish for you the deepest reverence as well as most tender regard.'

'Pray offer no excuses, dear sir,' she frankly replied. 'When you know me better you will realize that I sail outside the silly exactions of conventionalism. By that I do not mean that I have no respect and reverence for etiquette, or, in other words, for the order and beauty of society. On the contrary, I hold that refined exhibitions of regard to the feelings and position of others are a bounden duty, as well as a necessary and refining art, but the pedantry and absurdity of etiquette I despise. True conventionalism, or rather true etiquette, cannot be bound by exact rules and forms. For instance, the familiarity of a refined, intelligent, noble man or woman can never be anything save reverent and beautiful, whereas, in many cases, the outward forms of etiquette of the snob or shallow-minded fool are but mere disgusting expressions of ignorance. If the language, the expression of the eye, and the general deportment tell we have met a friend, or a true lady or gentleman, surely we shall be sufficiently free and noble to allow such to speak and act according to the evolutions of feeling and inclination. True etiquette should draw out the best and noblest in every one, and put man and man and woman and woman at respectful ease. Yet modern etiquette has a tendency to do the very opposite. In too many cases it freezes every generous impulse, and sets each on an isolated mock pedestal, and each and all go through life like lonely ghosts, with an iron mask on their hearts. It may be, however, that you are considering me idealistic and romantic, but I have absolute faith in the authority of the human soul and the intuitive refinement of mutual affinities. We, however, need not waste our present moment of unexpected bliss talking on the absurdity of modern conventionalism. In our case, such a term has no meaning, for it has no sympathy with the sacred feelings of old acquaintances. Major, we are more than acquaintances, we are friends, and friendship is the most blissful and perennial of God's gifts. It is a union full of tender confidence, endearing, helpful sympathy, and adoring reverence. It is good, and only good, for it is real and sacred as the soul's religious aspirations.'

'Surely I have been afraid to feel the touch of grey hairs, and to look on the time-withered expression of declining years,' the Major muttered, as if oblivious of his lovely companion; 'or has time been so kind, and fled so rapidly, that I am still lingering among the opening joys of budding manhood? Alas! to me time has been cruel and remorseless, and its wheels heavy and grinding. The pulse of time I have too often measured with intensest pain and despair, fancying the

dull, heavy pressure of eternal torment had shut me in. With me it has often been night,—dull, black night,—with no star of hope or twin spirit of sympathy. Father, mother, sister, all gone; fame a glittering sham; and the only road to distinction and position that of bribery, cunning, conformity, and sneaking flattery; and my only reward a homeless world, with a vast expanse of chaotic misery. No wonder I am cynical, soured, and sad, for I have often stood on the margin of open graves, and heard the dull, dead rattle of dust, as it closed up all I loved in the inanity of death. O God! I am old in experience in disappointment and defeat. For long I have been wearied and alone, and the clear, silvery voice of this spring bird makes me tremble at my own individuality, as the mystic melody of something I have heard and dreamed of re-awakens a feeble note of music in the empty ruin of a lost life. Ah, unconscious maiden! in innocence dreaming, like St. John in Patmos, for you life and love have much yet to promise. To me, alas! friendship and love are mere snow-balls, which melt and run away, or bubbles on the ocean—mere illusions, which simply allure to mock me with a mere hollow hunger.'

'I fear you are already finding me a very selfish, unsocial man, Rosa,' he said, striving to cast aside the strange sadness which had been so deeply stirred by such an unexpected meeting. 'I know it is very ungallant of me to sink into a cynical reverie, especially when I should be gushing on the pleasure of our meeting; but your manner and words are so unlike all I have been accustomed with, that, I confess, I am completely, as you ladies say, upset. Would I could reply to your common sense, and lofty ideas on etiquette, love, and friendship; and even if I could, I do not think I am in the humour, therefore pray excuse my moody caprice. The truth is, I have been so much alone that talking to myself has become a sort of second nature—that is, barrack life, with its bachelor isolation, and utter destitution of female influence and refinement, has by necessity made me a sort of double of myself. The strangeness and sublimity of your remarks, also, all are conspiring to thrust me out of my indifferent self, into self-examination with my suffering self. Lovely lady, you can have no idea of the train of sad thoughts and memories your presence and words are calling up. While I have been creeping and crawling, fretting and moaning and eating dust, instead of conversing with heaven, you have grown into a full-grown woman, replete in every ennobling excellence, and all thrilling with the mystery of divine inspiration. Already I feel your healthful influence enwrapping my lonely isolation, and your mystic sympathy pouring healing into my festering wounds; and my dead, corroded heart is aching with spasmodic efforts to thrill and throb with the blessed joy of a hopeful life. It may shock you, but I am both cynical and soured; and if you can convince me that the dusty inanity of the grave is not the meaningless end of this horrid farce, but that life, although mysterious and sad, is a harmonious whole, the very realness and grandeur of which renders it incomprehensible to finite reason, I may take heart, and try to make my latter days better than my first. People talk of religion, but I confess I hardly know what it means, and the farther I have wandered on the face of the

earth, I find there are as many religions as there are races. Even this Christianity of ours, claiming to be the last full revelation, appears to me to be a failure; and if I understand the words of Christ aright, He propounded no positive immortality, nor any doctrinal conscriptions. The eternal life—*i.e.* the life of goodness—He certainly often brought forward as the pearl of great price. However, in these times we have so enshrouded His pure devotion to duty with rites and sacraments, and mystified His teaching with theological dogma, that I do not know anything about what it means.

'You do not need to apologize to me for any of your moods,' Rosa said. 'I like to see a man or woman playing out their true individualism. However, your experiences, and the uses you have made of these, do not in the least take from the beauty and reality of friendship. It appears to me, that the very fact that the Founder of Christianity did not make it the particular aim of His life to elucidate the science of the soul's immortality, but rather to bring it into closer communion with God as father, is in itself presumptive evidence that He, the Divine Man, considered immortality inherent in humanity; and if immortality be part and parcel of our mysterious gift of life, we have within us the victory over death, simply because death can have no power over that which it cannot destroy. Hence the truth of Christ's saying, "He that believeth in me cannot see death." You are right in saying there are as many religious beliefs as races of men, and the mission of Christ's life was to dismantle religion of doctrine and delusive superstitions, and throw the soul back upon self-reliance, and in direct communion with the great Author of life as father and infinite inspirer. There undoubtedly is a sort of exciting gratification in what is popularly called worldly pleasure; nevertheless, no mere worldly distinction or success can fully satisfy the deepest cravings in our inner sensorium of feeling, and while we have no conscious oneness of feeling with the eternal and abiding life, as viewed from an atheistic or materialistic standpoint, will for ever appear confusion and chaotic misery. However, I do not say even that the most advanced faith will all at once clear away all mystery from life; and while we are related to imperfect life, there will be pain and suffering. Not a day passes but some wanton arrow is aimed remorselessly at some poor, quivering heart; and I confess I have often times of doubt and despair, times of bloody agony, when heart and flesh faint and fail. Nevertheless, as we grow in sympathy with the pervading spirit of divine beneficence, we more and more feel we are not orphans, and that the mystery of godliness is the subtle affinity of the infinite with the finite, drawing the child up toward the perfection of the God-Father. It may be hidden from the eye of sense, but our life is the very science of all science, and that which we call death is simply an essential change, or a higher evolution in the onward course of higher life.'

'You arrest and charm me,' the Major said. 'How reasonable and consistent life and all its trials must appear, viewed from your standpoint! When one thinks, it does appear absurd to imagine the Author of life so stinted in resources as simply to create beautiful forms of life to blot them out. Life begun here, you hold, is a grand, beautiful

mystery, extending beyond and still continuing to grow and expand. Even with our six thousand years historic man, as but a passing stranger here, we go on seeking heaven and the all of immortality on this side the grave. Of course, the heaven and the immortality both begin here, and there is a sort of co-operate continuity of all human progress. I admire your idea on Jesus' life and mission, how He strove by word and deed to throw the soul in direct communion with God. It must be obedience to conscience, and righteous and tender regard for all the rights and interests of one another, and devout reverence for all above and around us that will be the spirit and principle of the religion of humanity. When I am in a reflective mood, I fancy all the various faiths are tending toward the one ideal purity, love, and goodness. And, as you say, as we grow in purity, it may be we will realize more fully the divine science of individual immortality, and the unclothing and reclothing of our inner, thinking, feeling *me*. Although I consider my life a complete failure, I confess I have a sort of creeping horror, a chilly dread at the bare mention of oblivion or annihilation. In fact, I would rather dwell for ever in hell than cease to be. The love of life could not be so strong unless it had been born of some never-dying power or principle within us. Even in poverty, dirt, and rags, and through many years of intense suffering, the generality of people will rather endure than rush into the quiet rest in the still, peaceful grave. It appears to me, the longing many profess to have for the oblivion of the grave, is simply the sentiment of poetry without its life-principle of pathos and passion. If there be no future of personal continuity, why make such a fuss about education and refinement? If we are but higher animals, doomed each in turn to be a meal for hungry worms, I do not see why we should be over-anxious to quicken the sensibilities and educate the conscience; and heaven knows we all suffer enough without adding more torture, especially in regard to those who are doomed to every form of social misery. The very fact, however, that the atheist worships humanity, and seeks to raise it, is an evidence that the religious instincts within him or her will have some outlet. I may be a vulgar sort of fellow, but unless we are to build on the hope of immortal life, I think the canniest way we can march from life into eternal death the better.'

'Without the hope of individual immortality, life is a fearful chaos,' Rosa remarked. 'Of course many will say, even granted that there is simply a corporate philosophy of immortality running on from first to last in humanity, the pleasure of study and research, and the refinement of education, give to each and all a just reward. Reward there certainly is, but I very much doubt if the pleasure exceed the pain, reproach, and worry. The truth is, either science or humanity must go to the wall. By that I mean that some of the monster assumptions and assertions, as well as the horror and cruelty of the vivisection chamber, must go to the wall, or else all the divine graces and excellences of beneficence, love, and mercy will die out of the heart of humanity. If the delusions and experimenting of science can only grow and establish their claims by murdering the noblest and best in mind and soul, I think even those who advocate a survival of the fittest will abide by common

sense, beneficence, and reason, rather than murder the intellect in the analysis chamber of dead materialism. Of course, in these times it is considered the perfection of learning and philosophy to sneer at all love and earnestness, and, glutting over a few black evils, say life is not worth living. However, if it be true nature reveals a great, wise Spirit of life, our immortality or continuity of individual consciousness must rest in and spring out of Him, and with His very existence our immortality stands or falls. Therefore, instead of mind, or all we know by thought and feeling, being dependent on the body, the latter, outside conscious intelligence, is but formless matter. As yet, I am only growing toward this grand truth, or beginning to see how it is possible to give it expression in human language. Nevertheless, while I say the false and cruel assumptions of science must go to the wall, this science of individual and corporate immortality will be found in consistent agreement with the highest and truest science. However, before such a divine revelation can be intelligently apprehended, the whole of the present popular beliefs and theories of theological dogma will require to be uprooted. At present the great majority may be said to believe in a dead god,—that is, in a god of a nation,—a book, a creed, and an avenging foe crying for blood, blood; and it may be many ages before the universal soul is unswaddled of these errors and superstitions. Nevertheless, all which found in God its life is wrapt up in His infinite beneficence, and that which He loves He will perfect and fill with happiness, even if it requires a million years to redeem a single unit.'

'Dear lady, you have great, sublime thoughts of God as a father,' the Major replied; 'and you must live and feel so as to draw that good Being very near. All your arguments are reasonable and suggestive, forcibly appealing to our highest conceptions of moral and intellectual greatness. Well, I am indeed delighted at our unexpected meeting; and this conversation, under the pale light of an autumn moon, has already made me less cynical and sceptical, and has infinitely enlarged my views and feelings as a citizen of the world. Death I can now regard as a fair-faced friend coming with new increase of life and blessedness. Judging from your general remarks, I conclude you have no particular church, no crystallized articles of faith, no favoured nation, no infallible party or ideal people; but, wedded to truth, you find a temple everywhere, a priest in every religious soul, and the kingdom of heaven in devotion to duty.'

'You are right, Major; I have no infallible creed, party, or church, and no favourite nation or race, nor yet any of those small, provincial conceits, which are all, more or less, evils, narrowing down our sympathies, and preventing an inflow of higher life,' she replied. 'The sensual and cynical may rave as they please, of life not being worth living,—and, I can tell you, most of these sneering, or rather childish fellows, keep a very tight grip of the very life they pick holes in, and take a very large as well as grumbling share of its pleasures. If we could only open our hearts and our lungs to let in something higher and purer than *croaking nightshade* and foul gases, we would find this a real good world, and human life a very beautiful and joyful thing. Would you believe, I am sometimes so intensely happy and overflowing

with the joy of life's luxury, that language fails to express the mystic enchantment? Away among singing birds, sporting lambs, racing deer, and the ever-ascending hum of silent sweetness from the throbbing heart of nature, I am so happy, that when I try to respond to the pervading joyfulness, the intenser adoration of silence prostrates me in lost wonder. It is true, love creates language and modulates the sound thereof, and love also revels in a silence of deeper blessedness, where no voice of verbal expression is heard. Perhaps I am too much of a sunshine Christian, but I think the new religion will be cheerful and strong, or it will simply be one voice more crying in the wilderness, and, to an extent, making a highway for the Sun of Righteousness.'

'Best of women! you are indeed breeding within me new hopes and new desires, and making me blush with shame at my cowardice and weak complaining,' the Major said. 'It must be an over-ruling Providence arranged and brought about this meeting. Perhaps, as you say, heaven is not so very far away—nay, it must be very near, for some mysterious influence is within me, drawing me toward the wise and true. Wandering to and fro among shrubs and flowers, I am all aglow with new life and new aspiration. Time is, indeed, a wonder-worker; but, alas! my sloth and selfishness have hitherto kept me wallowing in the mire; and some over-luxuriant faculties and feelings too often overmaster me, and become a sort of inherited curse. Your individual greatness tells me how much I have lost. My God! it is a fearful review that of a misspent life. Rosa, in plain language, I have been a fool, an idiot, a madman; and, like a towering cedar, you stand far above me. Nevertheless, your very greatness lends you the humility which enables you to stoop to draw such as me out of the slough of sensualism. Strange! life is indeed a thrilling romance—far more romantic than mere fiction. It seems but yesterday since you were a mere child sitting on my knee, asking all manner of amusing questions. Now, when all my mountains of difficulties are past, they appear like molehills; and it seems but yesterday since the prancing feet of your father's horses rattled along the beautiful streets and picturesque suburbs of the gay Scottish metropolis.'

Rosa did not speak, but hung heavily on the Major's arm. Inwardly she was shaking and quivering like the wind-swayed leaves. The face, form, and voice of her beloved father were seen and heard in every whisper of nature; and she felt as if she had but to spread out her arms to embrace him, as if she had but to breathe his name in a low, sweet whisper, and he would answer as of old. Never in all her life had she felt so peculiarly near to the mystic land of spirits; and the conversation with her aunt in the morning returned with such force that for the second time in one day she was again a child—a sad, orphan child, and repressed sobs choked all utterance. Her companion at once saw he had opened a hidden spring of sacred memories, and he deeply regretted having adverted to her past. He knew not that with such as love as she did, there is no real modification of sorrow, but a life-long yearning for re-union.

'You need not apologize for speaking so familiarly of dear father,' she replied, in answer to his earnest expressions of regret. 'Although

it makes me silent and reflective, you must tell me every little incident you remember. I think there is no conversation half so sweet as that on bygone days, and none so strong and inspiring as that on our relation to one another and the Author of all life. No wonder old people like to dwell on the past of buried loves. Next to the joy of having those we love beside us, is the pleasure of talking about them. What a pity we cannot talk more about one another without saying spiteful, uncharitable things! The moment you mentioned Edinburgh, I seemed all quivering with conflicting emotions. I sometimes think I am all nerves out and in, for a word, a look, or even an indication of feeling, makes me one liquid mass of vibrating sensation. I think those who only know verbal language must be poor indeed. Excuse me for rambling on. Returning to the days of *auld lang syne*, often, often I remember, when you and father were enjoying your game of billiards, I have stolen out, and for hours wandered up and down in the Old Town, reflecting on all its historic associations. By that time I was familiar with a good deal of history, and to me there was a sort of weird attraction in the remains of its ancient grandeur; and I imagined the tramp of ancient warriors and courtly princes was re-echoing in every old tower and mouldering ruin. The memory of ancient, bloody tragedies contrasted strangely with its modern, weltering profanity and squalid drunkenness. Somehow I was drawn by some mystic influence toward that background of ignorance and chronic poverty and crime, and went to and fro, peering into miserable, pinched faces and cruel faces, many of which were bleared and blotched with the stamp of vice and crime. Nevertheless, I felt so completely part and parcel of that misery, that lonely horror would steal over me, and I puzzled my childish brain to find out the why and wherefore of such inequality. Then, life was a fearful riddle to me, and while I could not understand anything about it, yet I felt those creatures, with pinched, hungry faces, living in such horrid dens, murdered with foul smells, and all over with rags and filth, were cruelly wronged. It was dreadful to hear the wail of the feeble infant in the drunken mother's arms; and all the money I could gather was given away to hungry-looking children, who hung so plentifully about entries, or ran to and fro, striving with desperate importunity to sell matches or newspapers. Many of these children knew me, and, for reward, called me the angel-girl. Some nights drunkenness would so abound that heart-rending scenes of fighting and rioting made the High Street a scene of chaotic wretchedness, a sort of hell let loose. Sometimes the tears and shrieks of women and children so terrified me that I sped home like a hunted hare to weep my heart to rest. Then I was so ignorant and silly, I thought I had only to pray, and God would come direct from heaven—which I fancied was the blue clouds—and convert every one into good, pure men and women. I was always careful to remember the time you and papa came to the dining-room for supper, and was generally in good time. Sometimes I found you comfortable at your one glass of toddy; and if you observed traces of tears on my face, you concluded my lessons had been too hard, and would lecture papa for keeping me so close at school.

'I remember everything as you put it,' the Major said, striving to

master his emotion. 'Truly, in your case the girl has been mother to the woman. Even in early childhood, Rosa, you had been far in advance of us old fools, with our billiard-balls and draught-board. Like Him who is the true model of all manly excellence, from a child you had grown in favour with God and man. Well do I remember of your coming in, like a grave-haunted ghost, with tear-bedewed face and eyes, like a timid bird, pleading for something, I knew not what. Of course I fancied it could only be your lessons too difficult. Little did I think the pale-faced, pensive girl was a young philanthropist, alone drinking a cup of peculiar sorrow, and too early struggling with the huge mystery of human sin and suffering. Like you, I confess, I have often been struck by the chronic misery and depravity of the Old Town of Edinburgh. Wide as I have travelled, I do not remember of viewing evil in all its manifold horrors with such supreme disgust and regret. It may be the splendid position of the city, its rare colleges of learning, its art galleries, luxuriant wealth, proud mien, artistic streets, balmy flower and shrub gardens, hoary castle, towering hills, and sweeping sea, render the very idea of a background of poverty, ignorance, and drunkenness unnatural and revolting. The truth is, the so-called Modern Athens, so beautifully situated, has always been regarded by me as a sort of miniature reflection of the dynastic glory, courtly pomp, art, learning, and philosophy, as well as the wealthy sensualism, flippant scepticism, feudal jealousies and wars, superstitious horrors, and low, brutal ignorance and lawlessness of all civilized nations.'

'You are right, Major,' she said; 'the reflective student can indeed see a miniature of cosmopolitan history in the ancient city. Truly, in its hoarded relics, hoary antiquity, and classic tastes, and in its destitution of all kinds of modern manufacture, and air of repose, we are deeply reminded of many traits of past cities, now only shapeless ruins, or rent remnants of faded renown. The physical grandeur of Edinburgh is almost unique; but in mental and moral stamina it has not over much to boast of. In the past it had many great men; and we must not forget it first gave the world the immortal fire and genius of Burns. Of course, it will no doubt be improving. However, last time I made a visit, I still seemed to think it was rather destitute of reverent wonder and earnest enthusiasm, and its theological opinions, like its religious life, more of dogma and form than soul and life. If it had a free library, less provincialism in its trade and commerce, more liberality in its colleges, and the Old Town all gutted out and rebuilt, it would be vastly improved. Even in this late year of grace, so-called golden Britain has much to overtake. Edinburgh in that respect is a true miniature of the nation, with its one million of paupers. It has, indeed, a smiling frontage of flowery gardens and rich monuments, which, at first sight, bend the soul with proud, patriotic admiration. But, alas! when one sees thousands of pinched, miserable faces, hungry and unwashed, peering out of horrible dens and hovels in Cowgate, Canongate, and High Street, we ask, What will be the end of all this? What are the city officers doing? Why should a local court have the power to fine men and women for refusing to have their innocent children poisoned by vaccination, and not be able to compel the city

authorities to buy up all these disease-engendering dens? The final cure for small-pox and all disease is physical cleanness and moral purity. Talk of the ignorance, superstition, and injustice of the past! If scientific men would only first purify and make healthful the life we have, we might then be interested to know whether it came from a monkey, a protoplasm, or a rain-cloud.'

'I wish the birds of the air would carry your message to the medical and scientific congresses,' the Major said. 'Pity it is you have not a wider audience for your God-message! Noble lady, I can see the poor are your especial care. Although I am neither critic nor philanthropist, I confess I have for long regarded our modes of charity a sort of festering cesspools of chronic evils. Why go on spending millions of money building and supporting infirmaries, work-houses, etc., and, as you say, allow unscrupulous landlords to draw large rents for houses with neither back-greens nor other necessary surroundings for decent and clean existence? The truth is, the thing is all *hotch-potch*; and we must sweep the tract and prayer away, and pull down our holes and dens, and let in the free sunshine of heaven, and human souls will see God in the garments He weaves around Himself. Rosa, you have sublime aspirations and noble ideas of humanity, and your sympathy and pity can only be measured by your love; but had you seen as much of real life as I have, I fear you would have more misgivings in regard to the future of any nation. Once you see behind our tinsel front the splendid meanness, sneaking, pandering, cowardly falsehood, hollow insincerity, and fiendish revenge lurking under smiles and prudential scheming, you may despair, and, retiring into solitude, let the farce play on. If you had stood among the hideous horrors of war, profanely considered by Christians as honourable and essential, and spent weeks and months in damp camps, among fatal disease, death, and reckless sensualism, and experienced the weary marching far from home to hunt savages with shot and shell, and when wounded, or lying dying of fever, to realize the mockery of the miserable reward of demagogues who feast on blood, and wax wealthy and wanton on robbery, you might lose all faith in human redemption,—nay, in God and goodness,—and understand my morbid discontent and cynical scepticism.'

'Just as I expected; you would doubt heaven dry, and people space with a legion of irredeemable evils, Major,' Martin Dawson said, suddenly appearing before the conversing pair. 'The truth is, your sluggish, morbid soul has got so wrapt up in fancied wrongs and magnified hardships, that you paint society a jaundiced mass of putrid corruption. However, it's all the effects of too much whisky. A man who constantly indulges in any stimulant is utterly unable to see and understand facts and things as they really are. The one hour the brain is unduly excited, and seeing doubles for every single; the next it is a poor, floppy mass of morbidity, haunted to despair by its own delusions. However, I am not here as an avenging foe or croaking parson, but as a friend, to warn you two that you are forgetting time, and remaining rather long *under a cloud*. Fashionable parties are the most conservative of all clubs, and have no sympathy with romance, or the beautiful enthusiasm of a fixed idea, but live, move, and have their being in well-meaning gossip.

Therefore, if you wish to be without reproach, you had better take a gentle hint, and show face among the music and shining whirl of the ball-room.'

'What are you up to, you madcap?' the Major inquired, seizing Dawson, and shaking him, half in jest half in earnest. 'Do you think your authority as a poet and Radical essayist lends you the privilege to speak in that flippant manner to one of her Majesty's commissioned officers, especially when he is the companion of one of the noblest of women?'

'I like to see fire when of a deep red or pure white, but the milky white is as dangerous as fiendish,' Dawson replied, stroking the fine brown whiskers of the Major, and peering far into the hidden interior of his manhood with that critical acumen which is the special gift of poetic genius. 'However, it is useless wasting good passion on such as me. I am proof against everything of a sensational character. I suppose my remarks about whisky did not pass for a good joke; but I simply meant that were you left to represent a drowned race, and to repeople a new world, like Father Noah, you would get *top-heavy* on the first grape harvest.'

'That is putting it rather strong,' the Major said, joining Rosa in a burst of laughter at the idea. 'It's too bad of us modern demagogues having a joke at the expense of the first ship-architect. However, it is said all is fair in love as well as war; but you have woefully missed the mark when you suppose my besetting sin is strong drink, and it affords me pleasure to inform you it is something more rational and infinitely more endearing. Give me a lovely companion, such as I now have, and my ark will float safely on an ocean of whisky. Dawson, you are a splendid fellow, and I thank you very much for introducing me to this admirable lady. With her at my side, I can enjoy your hard hitting.'

After some more bantering, the Major and Rosa made for the ball-room; and as Martin Dawson walked among flowers and shrubbery, his finely-shaped head was bent, and the listing winds and the witnessing moon caught up his lonely soliloquy.

'This will make a splendid chapter in my rearing novel,' he muttered. 'Whatever the public may think of it, every incident and every trait of character and expression of thought and feeling are born of actual facts and experiences. Ah, what restless annoyance is this? Can it be I am fool enough to be jealous of Wray? I had fancied I was more of a philosopher. However, if I cannot reason my own feelings into subjection, I can see into his aching hunger for mutual endearment, and know all his so-called cynicism will fly away should he be so fortunate as meet his twin spirit. At present, no doubt, he fancies he has the better of me in leading Rosa triumphantly through that giddy throng. It is no mean triumph, I grant, especially to an officer with his military *bounce* and caste pride. To a man of letters, however, such a triumph should be a mere trifle, seeing his is the diviner relationship, springing from union of mind and blissful interchange of sympathy. To me all save a pure, Platonic friendship is impossible. Like a blasting, benumbing power, my early unhappy marriage shuts me in with a secret bond of slavery. Perhaps, after all, it is better, as it leaves me free to labour

for humanity, to search for truth as for hid treasure, and to scale the sublime peaks of aspiration. What we sow we reap is the law of the universe; and the man who whines at his errors and failures, and does not buckle them on as armour whereby to overcome the imperfections of his nature, is a weak fool, and should, in mercy to society, commit suicide. On reflection, there are higher joys, intenser pleasures than conjugal endearment, and wisdom is to labour for the best and not for the most desirable. Have I not fame? and a noble soul which can grasp the infinite, and hammer it out so as to meet the apprehension of the less endowed? Yes, great God! I am content with my fate, and only seek aid to live for Thy glory and honour, for truth and humanity.'

Thus musing and muttering, Martin Dawson made for the ball-room, and in a few moments he was standing in the centre of the gay assembly, beating time to the music with the answering melody of his rapt soul. Like twin stars, his sharp black eyes were swimming in liquid dews of inexpressible feeling, and his thoughts were far away in an immensity of idealism, forming, planning, reasoning, questioning, and arranging. Light, light, let there be more light on this moral chaos! he was crying; and alone, like a creating God, he groaned and struggled for righteousness, justice, love, and concord, to glorify and perfect humanity. Like flames of burning lava shot up from the rent bosom of an overcharged volcano, flashes of divine thought and holy feeling issued from his emitting centre, and volumes were written in an hour. So absorbed and oblivious had he become, that men and women passed and re-passed like shadows on the wall; and the poet and philanthropist might have done something fearfully absurd and eccentric, had it not been that a fairy form approached, and while a gentle hand was laid on his arm, a voice soft and sweet as an *Æolian lyre* said:

'Come, shining star, with godlike soul of might and love—come and radiate the cold centre of empty mannerism and proud pomposity with the warmth and vitality of true manliness. Come, celestial, rapt poet, descend from your lofty eminence, and for an hour be a frail mortal, subject to like passions, follies, and vanities as ordinary beings. Come, cast off your enrapturing trance, and dance with me, for I am sure your feet are impatient to beat out the musical measures of your mind and heart. Why, what have I done or said that you gaze at me in that bewildering fashion? Have I ventured too far in asking you to dance?'

'Dance, of course! I will dance on my head, let alone with my feet, if your sweet voice request,' the impassioned poet said, pressing her hand to his lips, as he led Rosa into the centre of the floor with the mien and majesty of a Titan.





CHAPTER XV.

EVERYDAY EXPERIENCES.

IN the morning aunt and niece met without any appearance of change in regard to their mutual feeling of love and esteem. The revelations of the previous day seemed forgotten, and the usual morning greetings were gone through with equal ardour and sincerity. During breakfast, however, Rosa noticed that her aunt's countenance wore a deeper shade of underlying sadness, and that, ever and anon, her lip curled as if beating off or despising some real or fancied injury. Intuitively she felt that something unpleasant had happened after she had left for the Haddington party; but Mrs. Aslawn was a woman none need question, and Rosa, knowing her mental peculiarities, had simply to wait and wonder. Her aunt always reflected cautiously before communicating her inner thoughts and feelings, and especially her sorrows, to another. If the fire be hot and consuming, it will go out the faster by confining all its outlets; and if the sorrow which rent the heart was a libel on humanity, a disgrace to all blood ties, the deeper it was buried the better; and if the heart was aching because of disappointment and reproach, its wounds would heal up all the quicker the less the rents were torn open. So thought our august lady; and without ever adverting to the unexpected visit of her brother, she began questioning Rosa in regard to every particular of the Haddington party. Every topic of conversation, all the styles of dress, and even the flirting incidents were listened to with patience and interest, especially Rosa's unexpected meeting with Major Wray.

'Are you sure you gave the Major a cordial invitation?' she remarked. 'Already I am feeling impatient to meet him, and to see how he bears the dignity of two-thirds of human life. I must confess I have most relish for male society. Not that I dislike my own sex; on the contrary; but simply because most ladies are so shallow and trifling, perfectly unfit to conduct a sensible and appreciative conversation on any branch of art or science. I do trust the Major is true to his early Conservatism, and that he will be able to tell me many comforting things of my brother as a general, to compensate, in some measure, for your bombastical revelations.'

'If he comes to-day you will have a splendid opportunity of testing his metal,' Rosa said. 'I trust he may look in, as I must be away the

most of the day overtaking my mission work. Our conversation was of a nature last night outside all partyism, and I could not take upon me to say whether the Major is Liberal or Conservative. Men who are far travelled learn the true value of conformity.'

'Go out visiting to-day!' her aunt replied. 'By and by, I expect, you will take up your abode in some of our charity institutes. You have your own health to consider, and I think I have just allowed you heretofore to carry philanthropy rather too far. The day is damp,—in fact, I think we are going to have a storm, so just rest you one whole day. Believe me, Rosa, the world will move on equally well although you never put a finger to the helm. What will the Major think if he calls and finds you away acting the Bible-woman? Do be nice and lady-like for one day, and get to your wardrobe and jewel-box, and prepare for making a fine effect. The Major is of a good family, and once his dotard old aunt is gone, he will have a nice, independent living.'

'Dear aunt, I have heard you often remark, I would find a moral in a snuff-box and a science in madness, and it strikes me the Major had enough of me last night,' Rosa replied. 'You know dancing always appears to me a possessing madness, almost as catching as what is vulgarly termed the *devil's dance*; and last night I became unusually grave, and walked among the moonshine merriment of goody-goody spoonyism like a fish out of water. However, I got away with the Major, and got moonstruck, and we forgot everything save the rare luxury of conversing at freedom on reasonable subjects. Such being the case, on calm reflection, the said gentleman may feel he has had enough of me for one week, and I will be well away. With racy enthusiasm you can enter into all the lore and customs of old times, when the Major and papa were boys together. It strikes me this old acquaintance thinks me rather radical and sweeping. If I mistake not, like yourself, he is remarkably proud of birth, position, and honour, and at your first meeting I might be rather too equalizing. Would, aunt, I was equal for the duties of a real infirmary or hospital nurse! What is now called the old school or system, certainly had many forms of evils and abuses: many of the nurses were drunken, ignorant, and cruel, and patients were neglected, children ill-treated, and hundreds murdered and left to die in the agony of undressed sores. But the new system is not less barbarous, and far more fanatical and dangerous. If there be less drunkenness and open neglect, there is more general indifference to all save a fixed code of too severe discipline. In fact, the new system is simply converting our non-sectarian philanthropic institutes into nurseries for mawkish morality and doctrinal theology, and the rigid enforcement of certain dietary and cold-bath purgatory; and mock modesty is not less monstrous and unjust than the extravagant private dining-table and pompous regard to selfish comfort of the holy sisterhood. All's well, however, that ends well; and the injustice and refined barbarism of infirmary and hospital *vivisection* is now covered over with the nun's hood and a flowing mantle of mock piety, and the vow of eternal celibacy is not less of a farce than the secret flirtations with young doctors and curates. It is my opinion;

true nurses, like poets, are born, not made and moulded by any form of religious asceticism. To reform hospitals, we need the pathos of womanly pity and the divine miracle of sympathy. Not a sort of general sympathy with the aggregate of human suffering, but the healing sympathy which tenderly and intelligently enters into every solitary case. However, these impulsive, fanatical nurses help to obscure the blundering and reckless experimenting of homeopathy.'

'Wisely spoken, Rosa dear,' her aunt replied. 'All history attests that the most hateful as well as the most incurable evils have been conceived, hatched, and promulgated under the guise and protection of a form of religion. I see you are wonderfully conservative in some matters. However, I confess I have no great admiration for monkish sisterhood, under whatever name it may shoot out. As you say, the power which shall reform hospitals and overthrow a deal of the murdering drug system, will be a living soul, and not a profession. I have watched these prancing angels in mask, and it appeared to me they cared as little for the fever or small-pox patient as the paid Bible-woman for the ugly, ragged imps who stare, with open eyes and hungry bellies, as they rattle off the well-rounded prayer. Although I war with you over your free-thinking and lax theological opinions, I am truly glad you are all through and through generous, noble, and tender, with sympathetic regard for the poor and oppressed. Self with you is always last, never first; and downright radical selfishness is the cardinal sin of our times. I wish for your sake, Rosa, I had been wealthy, but it is not so; and I repeat, that I am glad you hang so loosely on the things which perish with the using. However, I confess I would like to see you comfortably married before I go the way of all the living. It may be you are carrying your peculiar ideas on marriage too far. Love in a cottage is very fine in romance, but the old saying, that when poverty comes in at the door love flies out at the window, is the experience of daily life.'

'It may be, aunt; and you are very kind in having my best interest so much at heart,' Rosa said. 'However, real life is the only romance I know, and my love is so real that I will abide by it even if it drag me to a very hard fate. Unfortunately, as you say, I have peculiar ideas or notions of marriage, and will continue thinking the holy state of wedded companionship has higher aims, and was instituted by nature for some nobler purpose, than the mere continuity of the race, and sharp commercial acuteness and cunning for a prudential partnership in a well-stocked farm, shop, bank, or other paying speculation. The truth is, I would rather be a factory-girl, working for a few shillings a week, than marry for comfort without mental and affectional affinities. I grant that hundreds have been cheated by appearances, have found only a clod or slovenly creature where they expected kindred tastes and aspirations; and these men and women generally make mistaken marriages educational crosses, whereby they rise into a very high state of individual greatness. Therefore, do not grieve for me. When you are gone, some of my powers will surely win my daily bread; and, be assured, no low or sensual motive will ever induce me to change my name. If the one man never comes my way, I will not hinder civilisation by being an old maid; and, think of it as we may, the reckless

increase of population without any consideration for the children born into a state of weltering misery is something calling for earnest consideration.'

'Rosa, from your wide reading, and a reflective nature, and experience as a city philanthropist, you have arrived at many sound and saving maxims,' her aunt remarked. 'Like the divine Friend of sinners, you have freely mingled with the poorest and vilest, and can estimate the extent of evil, and the best remedies for its destruction. Further, I believe, as you say, that you often find the truly great and godlike dwelling in the centre of squalid misery, and more often find vulgar meanness and sneaking hypocrisy dwelling like owls in the centre of social comfort and grandeur. Again, your idea of the nobility of work is indeed commendable; but, my dear Rosa, there is a wide difference between theory and practice. Some such ideas as you have been holding forth look well in words, and heroism is splendid in novels and romances, but the actual has many and numerous mountains of difficulty to scale. To know wisdom is not the highest good, nor to feel goodness possible the divinest attainment; but to do good and sin not is eternal life. However, it is no small consolation for me to know you are prepared for the worst; but before we have acted wisely and endured heroically, we cannot be called great or real. Although I am a Tory of the old school, I cannot shut my eyes or my heart to the sad fact that thousands upon thousands of working, struggling women have a very hard lot. Long hours, small wages, dear provisions, and miserable house accommodation, are indeed small inducements to a life of loyal, contented goodness. So you could descend to be a factory worker, my fine lady, rather than marry a wealthy clod or a sensual swine! Very fine theory, I grant; but in these great factories you would find modes of injustice and cruel barbarism you have no conception of. Nevertheless, most of these mill-owners are leading Liberals, crying down every imperial form, and heaping all preventible evils on the heads of land-proprietors. There is a great, howling cry about land-tenure and the injustice of entail laws. But what of slave-owners? These mill-owners howl over every necessary war for the upholding of our national character, and with a fell sweep blame Toryism for all misery at home and horror abroad; but in open war we can count our slain, deliberate on the advantages and disadvantages likely to spring out of such wars; we can bind up the wounds of our maimed, and immortalize the slain in history as heroes; and on all classes alike falls the burden of heavy taxation. But who numbers or cares to number the tens of thousands of ill-paid, over-worked women, who stand ten hours every day in unhealthy atmospheres, who annually die of semi-starvation, imperfect clothing, and want of time for healthful exercise? Who ventures to tell the employer that he is a slave-owner and promulgator of every principle of injustice and immorality, when he puts away two men at one pound ten each a week in order to take in six women to work the same number of hours a week for less than ten shillings per week? Rosa, if Liberalism is to open up new spheres for women, let it be liberal and righteous, and not take advantage of woman's necessity to reduce the standard of workmen's wages, and lay the axe

at the root of all that is great and noble in true art and industry. Ah, Rosa! do not, with your fine idealism, and time and tastes for study and kindred reciprocity, be too hard on our women for prudent marriages. To be idle and beaten from shop to factory, and from factory to maid-of-all-work, is no easy thing; to wander in a great city begging for employment, and to be put down for an idle loafer when simply having a look at a cook-shop to try and satisfy the craving of hunger; the cold hearth, the empty cupboard, and physical nature worn with want and anxiety, and the mite of charity, and the sneer of the more fortunate, are stern facts, everyday experiences in our country—facts more pathetic than all poetry, experiences more awful than the flimsy clap-trap of our fashionable romances. With all my Toryism, I do not go in for a canting, judging religion, that starves men and women out of earth into heaven. Heaven is here, down in this planet earth, as well as in yonder huger planet of higher intelligences; and God means to reach us through our bodies. Ah! we hold bodies too cheap. They are God's greatest masterpiece of art, and we should so glorify them; and the honest atheist who seeks to spread social beauty and happiness, is nearer the kingdom of God than a canting Christian with pauperism in one hand and a tract in the other.'

'Noble-souled aunt, it is simply your cloak that has fallen on me!' Rosa said, embracing her venerable relative. 'I never dreamt you so considered the cause of the poor, oppressed workwoman in her struggles for the means of independent living and fair play in the race of life. At present she must either starve, or work at any price, and along with that has to bear the taunts, jeers, and opposition from the male portion of society. However, the time will surely come when men and women will organize together for a common good, and take from employers the power to take a mean advantage. I grant you it is easy moralizing on virtue outside the fiery ordeal of temptation; beautiful discouraging on heroism and endurance, with full pockets, well-filled store-barns, and fine furnished houses; but the real experiencing of all or any of these hardships you have so graphically pictured would indeed test the strongest and purest. Still, I often think I would like to be one of those mill-workers or other white slaves, so that I might, by example, prove that to be humble and ill-paid and undervalued is no reason why one should undervalue oneself, and remain ignorant and vulgar. It is a sad fact that the majority of factory and other workwomen are ignorant and vulgar. Knowledge is the cheapest and best possession, yet the majority of all women spend every penny on dress, every minute of spare time on frivolous amusement, and remain in mind and soul dark and benighted, totally indifferent to the purer joys and pleasures of an enlightened, cultivated mind. Such sad facts of themselves tell that creed and doctrinal religion—that is, all dogma and form without life and spirit—is a failure. The church bell weekly rings in the ear, and the orthodox tract is laid monthly on the table; but these bring forth small fruit, save a crust of outside respectability, and now and then a wave of fanatical emotion.'

'Sound, orthodox doctrine is the truth of God, the special inspiration of His Spirit,' Mrs. Aslawn replied. 'Sound doctrine, the

yea and amen of our confessions, and the foundation of our faith as delivered to saints, has nothing to do with the Radical rubbish of tract distribution and insulting modes of philanthropy which now disgrace true Christianity. It is a fact worth the serious attention of all sects of religionists and all grades of politicians, that our struggling work-people, who are the backbone of the nation, require far more than an infirmary, a workhouse, a prayer, and a tract. The truth is, the expenditure of money on tract distribution and workhouse upholding would be more rationally as well as more divinely spent in finding work for the unemployed, or providing a sort of decent pension for the aged and indigent, whereby they could live in a state of decent civilisation, instead of being forced in like cattle, and fed and driven like such. The money annually spent, or rather lost, in supporting badly-managed infirmaries would be far better used in rebuilding our cities, and letting in fresh air and pure sunshine to our narrow lanes and dirty closes; in putting a plentiful supply of water into every house, and accommodation for domestic and laundry purposes; and in educating the ignorant in the laws of physical science, which are the laws of God, which ought to be in every heart. The men or women who live as misers, and leave money they cannot use for founding hospitals and building infirmaries, insult God with their mean, beggarly lives, and insult humanity at death with their donations to perpetuate ignorance and foster disease. In our mad haste to be rich we shut our eyes to these things. Money, money is the popular cry, the one desire; from the sermon that pays best down to the lying advertisement, and slipshod goods, hurriedly manufactured, and adulterated to meet the hot pressure for money. In fact, everything is spoken, written, built, and sung that will win the speediest sale and most return of dry cash. Even our huge charity schemes of infirmaries and workhouses are mainly supported by selfish investments of so much per year for so much in return.'

'Aunt, you are teaching me; and while you are teaching me, you are inspiring me with new enthusiasm for humanity,' Rosa said. 'It is indeed a miserable manifestation of the goodness of God and the beauty of Christianity, to give a poor man or woman a tract and a prayer, and leave them unaided in narrow closes and in small, low-ceilinged hovels, shut in from God's health-giving sunshine, and bracing pure air, complete strangers to the influences of green fields, fragrant flowers, and singing birds. It is indeed a miserable sight, that of thousands of Protestant ministers, living off the gospel of Christ, and yet so unlike Him in spirit that no two sects can agree, even in social science, and have a great mutual fund for going to the very centre of pauperism, idleness, and drunkenness. If religion be above politics and state management or support, it might show politicians that it is from heaven, and can make earth heaven, instead of gazing helplessly toward civil government, and having the cool arrogance to question its authority when it admits men into Parliament who will shame Christianity with the humanity of atheism. To breed and foster disease by neglect and indifference, and then to introduce high poor-rates to support and build homes for incurables, is surely the perfection of social and political

science. Of a truth, there is yet much to overtake. However, in the far past, Christ, the good, the pure, and righteous, the revealer of God the Father, and founder of the great brotherhood of humanity, willingly suffered opposition and death by the fanatical, the self-righteous, the doctrinal and superstitious, rather than refuse to bear witness to the authority of the human conscience. Surely we, in these latter times, when the spirit of higher enlightenment is abroad on the face of the earth, will continue faithful, and strive, against all opposition, to make life more true and beautiful.'

'In philanthropic generosity, and beauty of thought, and depth of feeling, you are as profound as natural, and as wise as pathetic,' her aunt replied. 'But, alas! my heart aches to hear you praise the wisdom, the beneficence, and greatness of Christ's works and devotion to duty, and pass over the special sacrifice of His atoning blood. If heaven could be won by generous toil, noble, tender feeling, and soaring mental speculation, you would scale to its loftiest height. I believe, rather than accept Christ's blood as an atonement from original and all actual sin, you would take up your eternal abode with lost devils, whose pride was their damnation. Believe me, however, that all your intellectual greatness and all your good works are but as filthy rags without the free gift, the seal of Christ's blood. Rosa, why cannot you believe in the essentials of eternal life? Would I could stand for you in that day when the fire of divine wrath will burn up all your works as hay and stubble! The very idea of you being cast away into everlasting punishment often makes my head a fountain of tears, and my heart a swollen mass of convulsed anguish.'

Rosa could not reply. It was evident her departure from orthodoxy was a source of great anxiety and sorrow to her aged relative; and rising to hide her emotion, she gazed out at the window at the soothing face of nature.

'Surely, in the future, to which the treading feet of all generations are hastening, there will be no more heart-burning misunderstanding,' she thought. 'Ah, it does pain me to cause that dear mother anxiety and sorrow; yet what can I do? If she did not question me so closely, and stand up so firmly for all the articles of an inconsistent creed, I might live my religion, and utter not a word anent my beliefs.'

Later in the same day Mrs. Aslawn appeared still more sad and absorbed in some overmastering reflection or memory; and poor Rosa was more troubled, lest her scepticism, as her aunt called her liberty of conscience, was actually preying on her relative's mind.

'Aunt,' she ventured to say, 'I see something unusual is troubling you. If I cannot have your confidence, will you allow me to sing and play? You often tell me music exercises a supernatural influence on you, and that in no instance has it ever failed to banish unrest and gloomy reflections.'

'Yes, sing, please, for I am wearied and ill at ease. In the past the ethereal goddess of song has been a mystic siren, bearing me away on a wave of blissful feeling to the land of angels,' Mrs. Aslawn replied. 'I can see my sadness has touched your naturally gay soul, and the pathos of yearning love and disappointed ambition will lend to your voice the

arousing power of a really living soul. I hate soulless, unsympathetic music, even if the notes be faultless as the beat of life throbbing in the heart of nature.'

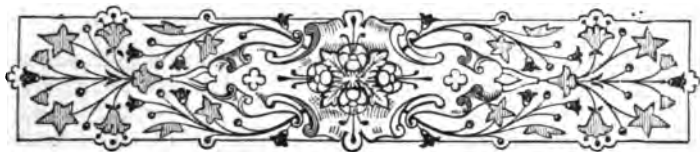
Rosa went at once to the pianoforte and ran her fingers over the keys, and the first sound told deep, conflicting emotion had indeed lent her passion and pathos. We have been so earnest with Rosa's philanthropy, freethinking, and beautiful home life, that we almost forgot she was passionately fond of music, and was gifted with a voice of no ordinary compass and richness. She knew her aunt loved sublime, mystic melody, and tender, spiritual words, and she sang of perennial life and love with touching sweetness. Her voice seemed thrilled and vocalized, like some rapt spirit proclaiming the last victory of suffering. It was evident that her thoughts were far from the din and care of everyday life, for she warbled like a lark in the elevated heights of rapt transfiguration. During one of her most impressive pauses, she fancied she heard a sob, a repressed pang of anguish; and turning round, she was terrified with the sight of her aunt, bent low, and struggling spasmodically to shake off some overmastering deprivation of all physical ability.

'What can I do, dear aunt?' she gasped, clasping her in her arms. 'I never saw you like that. Try to speak and direct me. Never before have I seen anything like this. Aunt, aunt, speak! Oh, do not die, and leave me all in a moment!'

To all Rosa's touching appeals the old lady gave no reply, but her sad, pleading look told she was suffering keenly, and conscious of all, but deprived of the power of speech. She grew cold as death, and utter helplessness stole over her; and Rosa propped her in a chair, and quickly bethought her that action, prompt, skilful action, and not vain lamentations, could save her guardian. With the skill and firm decision of a true doctor, she applied what appeared to her the most speedy and effective means of reanimating and arousing failing nature. Even beyond her hope she was successful, and on regaining speech Mrs. Aslawn muttered, 'Dear, kind nurse, carry me to my bed and lay me gently down.'

When the assistant servants were dismissed, she clasped her arms around Rosa, saying, 'At last my proud, enduring heart is burst, and seems ebbing out its feeble remains. This may not exactly be the last fell stroke, but the end is near, and I am wearied and ready for rest. Rosa, darling, don't weep. When the sands are all run down, we cannot but be waiting for some sudden gust to dissolve the refined casket; when the time appointed is fully expired, the delayed messenger must be on the wing, and I am neither unprepared nor unwilling to haste away. As we advance in years and experience, the soul in reality becomes youthful and sensitive, and the change of death seems as essential as our birth into this state of being. There is a wise arrangement in all God's works; and as we grow in years, we naturally lose our hold of all that is seen and perishing, and, growing wearied of all earthly experiences, we look wistfully away in search of something more enduring. So, at least, I now feel, and my refined soul is wearied, and longing for new scenery, for old friends long lost to sight, for new

activities and more congenial surroundings. However, lest you attribute this shock to anything on your part, I must, while I can, tell you I had a hurried and unexpected visit from your uncle. Late last night, just as I was preparing for bed, he arrived with that hateful woman as his wife; and the recollection of the interview, and the words which were spoken, and the feelings of disgust and hatred that sprung up, are all haunting, horrid ghosts. Do not, however, question me, for all you shall ever know of that miserable interview will be wrung from me in sorrowful fragments of incoherent anguish. What a sight! Fiends might well have wept with unholy joy to hear the trembling lips of a brother cursing the sister who taught his infant lips to lisp the Lord's Prayer. Miserable thought! never again can we meet until both have passed beyond the narrow strip of time, and dropped off their petty passions with their dying mortality. Lovers disagree, and time mellows and subdues the passions of lust and pride into sacred tenderness, and in friendship they enjoy more blessedness than in a hasty, ill-assorted marriage. Friendship broken or misunderstood suffers reproach and scorn, but time unearths the slanderous falsehood which wrought the estrangement, and the affinities of kindred reciprocity and the grace of gratitude draw the severed together, and again mutual esteem and tenderness enjoy a new heaven. But, alas! when the ties of nature are ruthlessly snapped, and all sensitive and sacred regard for the holy kinship of blood is forgotten, and duty cast to the wind, all for a mere selfish passion, and utter disregard for others' rights, a bottomless abyss of hell rolls between, and for such there is no reunion. When the daughter wantonly drags her mother's name and honour in the dust; when the son forgets his gallantry and obedience to her who gave him birth; and the brother, who should be the pride and strength of his sister's soul, rises in arms against her righteous complaint,—a cold, lifeless sea of eternal separation rolls between. Rosa, you will now be poor indeed; and it may be, when I am gone, you will require to be one of the ill-paid workwomen sooner than you anticipated. Now lay me down, for I am weary with discussion, weary of party strife, weary of the haste and bustling insincerity of this sceptical age, weary with trusting in vain men, weary of everything but waiting for the opening dawn of new life and sweet repose. I am now so wearied that I feel as if I could rest for millions of years in the quiet grave. Oh that I could even now rest, for my faith, my love, and reverence are all recoiling with sensitive pain! O God! Thou abidest for ever, the unchangeable and true, and I am feeling after Thee. One by one my earthly idols are crumbling into dust, and this, my last disappointment, has almost broken my heart and clouded my spiritual vision. Light, O merciful Father! light, order, rest. Let there be light and order, for the way is misty with a confusion of tongues, and the company insecure, and my troubled, groping soul is lost amid the rapids of man's carnal selfishness.'



CHAPTER XVI.

HENRY HAMILTON'S LETTER.

ROSA had just laid her distressed aunt to rest, and tenderly kissed her neck and brow, when a letter was brought her. It was from her cousin Henry Hamilton, and was as follows :—

‘Dear, lovely Rosa, the moment I sit down to write to you, a rush of fragrant memories comes wafting from the plains of sacred associations. You are, however, aware that it is no easy matter writing to one of your mental compass, large sympathies, and acute critical acumen ; and, as a matter of course, I am invoking the siren of poetic imagination to descend and baptize me, at least for the time being, with a degree of divine inspiration. It’s no use. The moment I begin composing, I find I am but a common plodder, all over earth earthy, and the mystic goddess, who dwells amid the ether of sunshine and the awful sublimity of reverence, will not visit my humble abode. However, you know my most lofty flights are but mere sparrow hops of dishonoured bills and club *repartee*. One consolation, you are as charitable as just, and it is with pleasure and pride I acknowledge you belong to the rare class of mortals who walk through life superior to all petty jealousies, vain ambition, and mean selfishness.

‘The truth is, I have never met one possessed of such an even balanced mind, for the light of your understanding is not more clear than the warmth of your gushing heart. Imagination, reflection, perception, conscience, judgment, and a quick-moving fancy, all move in rapid harmony. Sometimes your ideas and argument appear so mystical and subtle, that language seems used for a mask. However, as we read on we find, like an accomplished musician, you have been skilfully exhibiting the vastness of the meaning and the grandeur of the principle in the changing of the figure and expression, and as you sum up you strike out the idea, theory, or moral lesson so clearly that we see every detail, and feel the truth cutting asunder flesh and spirit. Not in single pages or chapters, or by isolated actions, can you be understood and justly appreciated, but as a great poetic whole, ever realizing and working out the sublime complex poem of human life.

‘In your last you drew a graphic outline of the future of social and political science ; but I have neither the knowledge, experience, nor enthusiasm to take the high position you advert to. However, I at

once admit the truth of all you say, nay, admire your faith, hope, and reverence, and your unwearied labour. You rate me too highly, and forget I am easily carried away with every wind of popular feeling and opinion. It may appear a weak confession, but I could no more contest popular opinion as you do than walk straight on to the moon. All pioneers of new truths must surely be made of different material than the most, I mean mentally. However, I am only one of the winning majority, neither pioneer nor hero, but simply a clodhopper blest with advantages of birth and position, which I endeavour to adorn with strict outward moral decency. I go to church because I am afraid to stay away. Nevertheless, I know it is cowardly and weak; but reproach and opposition would kill me. To be spotted for an enthusiast, a freethinker, or a sceptic would make me commit suicide; but with you every defeat lends new strength, and the very pain and sorrow of reproach add to your heroism and enthusiasm. In your last I seemed to see you separating light from darkness, and establishing all in order and amity. Do you not think there must be a standard of perfection as well as the power and desire to grow toward perfection? Is it not possible in art, science, and religion to attain to a fixed standard of excellence? At once I hear you reply, that in regard to spiritual and mental life we can never grasp or comprehend the all of God's excellence, attributes, and infinities of works, and consequently can never absolutely say we know the all—in short, that the unknown will ever overreach or overtop the known and apprehended.

'Strange how answers seem to come flowing in from some infinite source. The moment we begin digging in the mind we find it a rich treasure-house, and the more it is emptied the faster it fills. Although I want heroism, and march on in the crowd, God knows I fully agree, as you will see, with all your ideas and aims. How you so cheerfully get along with aunt puzzles me. It is indeed wonderful how the human mind lays hold of and clings so tenaciously to tradition and superstition. The dear lady has a mind far above the ordinary, yet her weakness for the petty distinctions of birth, and dogmatic belief in all Protestant dogma, must make your life peculiarly lonely. Of all the humbug,—excuse the word, as it is a favourite of mine,—that of caste distinction is the greatest next that of professional humbug. In these times most men would prefer to be as poor as a church mouse if only you call them professional and keep away from trade or workman. Noble-souled Carlyle must have fully realized the damnation of this humbug when he wrote his heroic gospel of work. I believe with the Romans, that he or she who boasts of their birth praises that which is not their own, and those who blush to own a humble parentage aspire to a position they cannot dignify.

'By the way, what is the august lady thinking of old Justice's marriage? I fear all the charity and religion of her holy, infallible Church will be impotent to quell her rage or win her pardon. Well, after all, it must be heart-crushing to see one's idols all crumbling into moonshine meanness.

'I never liked the wily old fox, and always think he had a hand in the bad business which ruined your father. Strange he so quickly

redeemed the estate. Ah, well ! I need not go raking up old sores. One thing, I have often seen that a man's enemies are those of his own blood, and this is not the first dirty job old Justice has managed. Of course he will have a splendid apology for aunt. He is to pay her a visit on his way home with his new-made bride ; only this time, I fear, he has counted his chickens before they are hatched. Once aunt takes a position, she is like the walls around her favourite Zion, firm and immovable. I can tell you, I was taken by surprise when I dropped on them in a London hotel. Of course it was a pleasant surprise to them—so they said, only I can tell you they looked a different feeling. It is good people can't deceive us outright even when they try. However, I am such a weak conforming fellow, and have such a pleasure in watching the various expressions of human meanness or nobleness, that I took it for granted they really meant what they said, and accepted their very cordial invitation to dinner. From the soup and fish to the *entrée*, all was *À*, and while pretending to eat like a sensual gourmand, I had rare amusement watching the matured couple cooing like young pigeons. Judging from what I saw, I conclude love, like winter fruit, tastes sweeter after it has been mellowed by the chilly experiences of time. I admire a thing clean done even if it be a mean advantage, provided we really know the intended deception. Mrs. Justice is a complete woman of the world, and while she wished me at Jericho, acted the new-made aunt-in-law in a most perfect and pleasing manner, and at parting kissed my cheek, and is to be pleased to do all she can for me.

‘Of course, you know, Rosa, this love-match puts the whole of old Justice's wealth past us poor——, with nothing but our ten fingers to scrape a living with. I know you will not trouble, and as for myself I don't care a fig ; but poor Philip, shipwrecked in purse, health, and character, will sink of sheer disappointment. It is a wretched affair all over, this waiting for dead men's shoes. Now, I fear Phil will fall a heavy burden on poor aunt ; and he is such a wreck, I start every suicide I hear of, lest he has made a desperate leap in the dark. Were it not for the shame, the sooner the better, as he is done for here. It is sad being related to such moral and mental waifs, who stick all the closer the lower they sink. However, every one who has ever hung on the gibbet was once some fond mother's darling ; and so over every foolish, deluded, vice-besmeared brother, some noble sister weeps and wails.

‘Here, lovely cousin mine, I have gone on scribbling until I have scarcely left myself room to tell you the French general, of whom I have so often spoken, is coming with me on my holiday. By the way, I have got six months' leave, and may drop in on you any day. Despite all her pride and prejudice, aunt is a dear soul, and has indeed made her house a sweet home to us. I can tell you, soldier-like, I am sick for home. May God bless the old lady, and be kind to her in the hour of death ! When in Paris, Count Daltour introduced me to Monsieur Vance Chand d'Alby. Before setting out on a tour he is making through England, the said general was exceedingly anxious to have an English companion. It is evident Monsieur has some especial object in view beside pleasure, but as yet he has communicated nothing to me.

I have told him many flattering things of my fair cousin ; and he is, Frenchman-like, hurrying me forward with greater haste than may be convenient for you. At first you will not care for Monsieur, as he is moody, and often drops off abruptly into a sort of sad abstraction or sullen silence. It's my opinion he is one of those either possessed of a fixed idea, a haunting, unhappy memory, or seeking some lost love. Apart from these peculiarities, Monsieur is a superior man, with a teeming brain full of rare intelligence, and brimful of interesting incidents, which he narrates with characteristic humour. He speaks English fluently, so you need not be rehearsing your French. Another thing, both aunt and your humble servant dislike all foreign tongues ; therefore, please note there is to be no French *tête-à-tête*. Furthermore, see that you keep that great heart of yours whole, so that you do not go to your fate ; for the old lady hates mixed marriages. When we meet I will tell you all the gossip of the Derby. All the old worthies were there, from the right honourable to the painted merry-man. To see our legislators, and all their imperial heads up to the ears in such a sorry, chaotic farce, is, to say the least, amusing ; and so long as we have noblemen spending thousands to keep up such barbarous farces, and the poor rotting in damp cellars and smoky garrets, the less said of the enlightenment of the age and the greatness of the nation the better.

‘Now, *ma chère* cousin, give dear aunt the usual amount of cordial greetings and loving regard ; and with much fond love, I am, ever yours faithfully,

‘H. HAMILTON.’





CHAPTER XVII.

THE AGED ASTRONOMER.

HAND me down the volume marked "V," an aged, venerable-looking man, lying on a humble bed in a meanly-furnished garret in a poor locality in W——, in Lancashire, said to a slender-looking boy, evidently of twelve or thirteen ; 'and by explaining to you how and why you will be able to arrive, by spiritual intuition or inspiration, at just and enlightened calculation concerning Planet X, I will endeavour, for a time at least, to banish this restless, corroding pain, which is hourly increasing, and wringing from me weak complaining. It is dreadful being so weak and cowardly. The time was when I could close my hand and my heart on all physical and mental pain, and dare fate or the inhumanities of man to do their worst. In fact, once, like brave John Knox, I neither feared the face of man nor devil. Now, however, trying privations have brought on manifold diseases, and I am sinking into the grave before my time. Not, perhaps, in a day or a week will the end be ; but as the poet so pathetically says, or rather sings :

"I'm wearing awa' like snaw when it's thaw,
Wearing awa' to the land o' the leal."

I am suffering much more, I daresay, than most think ; nevertheless, the enthusiasm which, during a period of healthful existence, made life beautiful and sublime, is neither dead nor dying, but burning and bounding with unquenchable ardour ; and even now, as I grow heated in my favourite study, flames of latent fire are shooting and sparkling, and I am feeling transfigured with transcendent glory. Robert, you must forget this old withered body, and try and catch the emanations of my youthful mind. The soul and mind can never grow old. These bloom amid the decay of nature, and migrate away to a new scene of more enduring activity. The very thought of attempting to demonstrate to you the majesty of mind, and the immortality of soul, makes me strong and cheerful. Tut, man, Robert, I thought you were a hero ! and yet I see tears running down your pinched cheeks. Why weep, when I have so often told you I am simply to shake off this old, worn frame, and go away to a better world ? You have God for a father, and He will not leave you to perish. Think on all the beautiful stories I have told you, and try and live out the noble heroism I have lived and taught. Do make an effort to overcome that emotion ; for a flood

of sorrowful feeling can, for a time, eclipse the triumphs of genius and the hope and victory of religious faith, and lay the majestic soul prostrate in an agony of desperate despair. The errors of evil are bitter drops in the cup of all suffering redeemers, and they must either drink it to the dregs with unflinching courage, or the salt of goodness will lose its savour. Reason is a grand, godlike power; but feeling is more divine, and also more powerful. It is the feeling of justice, of love, of charity, and patriotism, and not the principle, which sweeps all before it. Therefore, Robert, endeavour to be more masterful. By striving to overcome that which must be, we grow strong; and reason comes in to hush the fierce strife of passion like a celestial anchor winged from the very heart of infinite wisdom. It is now expedient that I go away, so that my labours of love and research may be recognised and become general property. I am so far in advance of the age that I must ascend to the Father before my message and gospel can be proclaimed to the people. Once, however, I am buried, I will rise again, and appear to many who will carry my messages to the ends of the earth. Robert, I have lived for an ideal; and many of my old companions have forsaken me, others have reproached me, and called me many hard names. Not for reward or a high position have I laboured, but for conscience and truth; and the sweet reward of work well and nobly done is rare blessedness. Like Jesus, in all times I have had meat to eat of which the world knew nothing, and seeming loss has been to me infinite gain. If you dedicate your talents to truth, to righteousness, and God, like the falling rain, which sinks into the earth to reappear in stem, leaf, bud, and fruit, that which you sow in labour and sorrow will produce an abundant harvest of everlasting life. As the tide of enlightenment rolls in; when science and art, and all the higher studies of men and morals permeate the centre of humanity; when our one million of paupers are industrious, happy workmen and women, and our fifteen millions of workmen and women are sober, educated, and virtuous,—then the holy book of nature will be better understood, and a holier faith and more rational understanding will bury ignorance, superstition, and bigotry among the evils which all pass and perish. Then astronomy will be the holy revelation, the divine angel pointing the way to everlasting life; then Planet X, that huge and glorious constellation sweeping in the circuit of infinite space, will be realized to be the future home of the children of men.'

While the sage spoke, the tender boy took down a bloated volume of mss. from a dusty shelf, and handed it to his sire. Then he propped him up in bed, put on his eyeglasses, trimmed the little lamp, and carefully placed it so as the feeble light would best reflect on the scribbly pages. For a time, with patient care, the astronomer examined and marked numbers of special pages, writing on the margin explanatory notes. Satisfied his meaning had been so far made clear, he began reading aloud with a vigour and taste truly remarkable. The undiminished spark of secret fire had, indeed, kindled up, and fresh volumes of deeper and more spiritualized thought and feeling welled up from his matured understanding. The entranced boy held the lamp close to the page, and while listening, gazed with rapt admiration

on the animated face of his father. The astronomer was likewise watching the son's expression of eager, adoring love, and strange feelings of pride and resignation made his heart more strong and his soul more cheerful. Now he had seen the fire of his own enthusiasm intensified in the pale, pensive listener, as well as a reflection of a double portion of his strong will and moral virtues, and he could die in peace. When he thought of his son's future, his enthusiasm burst forth like a flame of celestial fire, and like a creating spirit he sped through the domains of planetary space, examining, discovering, arranging, and elucidating the practical principles whereby the human mind can arrive at intelligent understanding of the motion and conditions of life, and the action and reaction of the various planets; not, however, as a mere reasoner or dry, materialistic inquirer, but as a poetic, religious teacher, leading the mind out of soulless dogma into the sunlight of unfettered communion with nature and the God of nature. Infinite space was his temple, every inch of which was holy ground, all embossed with the footprints of pervading deity. While he read on, like a modest flower in a dew-besprinkled glen, drinking in the warmth and vitalizing influence of sunshine, Robert inhaled the life, love, wisdom, and inspiration of his dying sire.

Closing the wonderful volume, so replete with sublime discoveries and saving wisdom, the father gazed sadly on his son, and in faltering tones said, 'Silver and gold I have none, but I dedicate this dusty volume of MSS. to you, in honour of my love for and faith in you. It is all my inheritance, and if you have neither wealth nor a good position in society, you have the mind and soul, the thought and feeling, and ever-abiding sympathy of a father who only bent his soul to truth and God. Remember this volume is dedicated to the inner faculties of your unsoiled conscience, and my most earnest wish and dying prayer is that you will push my research farther than my time would allow. Inside these covers you will find the best part of fifty years' earnest study. To leave to posterity a pile of unpublished MSS., I may be said to have sacrificed the love of fortune, ease of body, and all which the world holds dear. I long to say much to you on various subjects, but I am so nearly done with time and all its educating discipline, that my main object must be to lay before you the grand result of all experiences, or at least what should be the result, namely, the purifying and perfecting of the soul in all good. You are, however, young, and cannot be expected to grasp the full meaning of all my present counsels. Likewise, your complete ignorance of the rules of Euclid and the principles of mathematics, together with your total inability to grasp the technicalities of astronomy, prevent me from propounding to you the key to the whole of the noble science. In after years, however, when the brain is matured and all the feelings of manhood refined, all I am now saying will return in full force, and you will then more fully understand my present meaning. You may have to suffer much, but whatever your trials, let every experience and circumstance be educating influences, hammering out the godlike in your nature. Never grumble at hard circumstances, or envy mere school-crammed youths. To the inquiring, willing mind there are myriads of free schools, where you can walk in and find for yourself the pearl of great price. Thousands

of men and women idle at corners of streets, loiter in dram-shops and gossiping saloons as many hours every day as would make them scholarly in almost any branch of classic learning. You will find self-teaching books on almost all subjects at a very cheap rate, and the men or women who in our times mope or fret over a want of education are but mere croakers, nightshade poisoners, who wither up all the healthful beauty of life. All primitive professors in any science or art are self-taught men. No higher knowledge flows in from schools, but from the perennial fountain of uncreated excellence; therefore, Robert, be heaven-taught, and never murmur at fate, which is but a splendid excuse to be idle and improvident. So far as I can see, you will be among the self-taught, and if the task be harder and more difficult of mastering, the knowledge attained will be part and parcel of your own being. I know the ill-clad orphan is but a despised unit in the bubbling mass of modern pharisaism, and you will have to fight your way against unequal forces; but if you be faithful and enduring, you will bend all opposition to your will, and convert even the pride and passion of prejudice into weapons of defence. Knowing the world, perhaps too well, in its shady side, your high-set sensitiveness will make you shrink back from its alluring evils, and at the same time make you suffer all the more from its selfish insincerity. Therefore, as you grow in years, cultivate a love for seclusion, ever remembering, the man who cannot find delight in his own thoughts and reflection is not fit for society. Commune often with nature, and through its medium you will come very near to the immediate presence of your heavenly Father, and all His messages to you will be both tender and inspiring. Beneath the ethereal dome of space we are for ever in the holy of holies, treading the vestibule of heaven.

'We hear a great deal of the greatness of our age, with its wonderful discoveries, and acute, critical inquiry, and sneering contempt of all earnestness of feeling and enthusiasm, and far too little of its polished vice, soulless piety, and increase of private drinking and gluttony in eating. Be it yours, however, not to join in with any clamorous party, but to stand on the side of the handful who, by voice, and pen, and noble action, are striving to herald in better times. Do not despair although you have small success; and while pulling down, be reverent and respectful. The man or woman who cannot venerate the rush-light of a creed, or sacrament, or confessional, could not walk humbly and intelligently with God, even if the Holy One gave them a special revelation. The gospel of righteousness, of love, and enlightened forbearance is mightier far than shot and shell. God has waited thousands of years for our degree of enlightenment, and surely we can work and wait, leaving the conclusions and success to Him. Be all through life a Christ-man, honouring conscience and obeying the voice of God in your innermost soul. Like that Divine Teacher, make every day a holy day, every spot a temple of pure worship, every deed a redeeming prayer; and so shall you live and never see death. Like that spotless Hero, you too will soon scarcely know where to lay your head; and although poverty is not in the least essential to holiness and greatness of soul, but rather a souring, chilling, unnatural state or condition, thought and feeling can

rise superior to the most adverse and unfavourable surroundings. When the curtain called night, or our altitude toward the great orb of light, shades its overpowering splendour, and enables us to see farther into the mystery and immensity of vast systems of worlds, you will see Planet X like a beautiful star hanging out in perfect completeness, and speeding in the order of law like a dewdrop sparkling on the bosom of the ocean. The moment you have caught its beacon light, apply my improved telescope, and you will find it is larger than the sun, and capable of supplying life conditions to all who have been on our earth. Some discoverers call it the monster planet, and it is the last discovered, and considered to be the speediest in motion. However, were I to begin informing you regarding its life and speed, the figures would simply confound you. What I wish to impress on your youthful mind is the reality of such a world, so that you may not grow to think God some awful shapeless monster, and life a misty wonder without any definite realness. I wish to impress on your young mind the grand idea that you are a true son of the eternal God, with powers of mind wonderful and glorious in kind, if not in degree, as their Creator. I wish you to love human life, and to live to make it beautiful, and that the ghost called death is simply an essential change in our ascension to higher modes of being. When you delight to recall all my sayings and counsels, go to some high hill, to the loftiest peak, and take your glasses and notes of the marks, and calculations in Volume V., and by these you will find Planet X. Of course, intervening clouds and other floating ether will now and then come between and render your views very brief and imperfect. Once, however, you get your eye well fixed on that huge world,—so far, yet near; so immense, and yet so speeding in motion,—you will never forget the sight; nor yet forsake the study.

‘If you find in Planet X, as I have, the conditions of more healthful life, and see the ever-ascending stream of migrating spirits speeding on clouds of light, you will dance with joy, and say all creation is groaning and travailing with life, and only life. Robert, when you are studying and finding out new discoveries of Planet X, I will be a busy, blessed dweller therein, still finding new wonders and new enjoyments, and realizing that down here we cannot form any conception of what is laid up for us in that higher heaven. The grandeur of the scenery, however, nor yet the delightfulness of the company, will cloud memory or abate our love for those we leave down among the din and confusion of earth. In Planet X I will be as anxious over you, and my spirit will often descend with entwining love and sympathy; nay, love a thousand times intensified will kiss away your fever dews of mortal weariness, and reanimate you with fresh enthusiasm. Robert, honour my memory by testifying to your generation that astronomy is another seal of revelation opened, another bible of truth, a gospel of lofty realism drawing the soul above the seen in nature to the immenser realism of supernature, and that all so-called supernaturalism is but the aspiring of the spiritual after the hidden realities of the great Spirit. Tell your generation that the gospel of astronomy has no cave of howling despair, no capricious God of electing grace, no putrid protoplasm for its origin of life, but a great Infinite Builder, wise, just, and righteous in all His actions, and

supplying great, immense resources to every intelligent creature. Testify that the gospel of astronomy is onward, upward, Godward; loving mercy, establishing righteousness, and cherishing peace; and that its poetry and holy litany are reverence, charity, and love—reverence for the wonders of God's life, reverence for the life of humanity, reverence for science, reverence for art, and adoring enthusiasm of the knowledge and wisdom which is the key of philosophy.'





CHAPTER XVIII.

CHILD THOUGHTS AND CHILD SORROWS.

F AINT and exhausted, the aged astronomer fell back, overcome by a pressure of tender emotions. His chest heaved and fell, and great drops of sweat stood out on his clammy forehead. Poor, lonely Robert fancied he was there and then dying, and about to go off to Planet X; and he let the precious volume of mss. fall to the floor, and hung on to the cold hands of his father, asking him not to go away just yet, but to stay a little longer. Some days prior to this interview on Planet X and the mss. book, the astronomer had spoken a good deal of going away, and had given commandment concerning his burial. Therefore, to a degree, Robert was prepared to expect something to happen, but had a very vague and imperfect notion of what it really was. Surely dying must be easy and the sight pleasant, when his father talked so beautifully of it; but when Robert beheld the ghastly spasm of suffering convulse his father's frame, a creeping dread, a loathing hate of death, crept over him, and he found it was no easy matter jumping into a hero. It never occurred to the boy that his sire had overtasked his physical energies, and brought on the spasm of suffering by imprudence. On the contrary, like older, one-sided thinkers, he threw the whole on God, and began questioning the truth and wisdom of his father's counsels. Only an hour ago he had fancied he would stand and witness the victorious spirit of his father ascend right up to Planet X on a shining cloud, or see him fall asleep, smiling to approaching convoys. Seeing he could not see beneath the figure, it was no wonder that he almost went mad when he saw the hideous expression of pain, and heard the heavy moans of his over-exhausted father, and wept and sobbed like a lost, helpless child. Then he indeed endured a midnight agony of utter loneliness—loneliness so blank and desperate that minutes appeared an eternity; and out of the fearful depths of his child-heart he winged a strange yet intensely human prayer to Him he had almost ceased to trust. After a time the astronomer came round, and on regaining the power of utterance said:

‘Robert, I have been very imprudent in thus overstraining failing nature, but anxiety to impart to you as much knowledge as possible makes me endeavour to crowd all I can of counsel and instruction into my few remaining days. Ah! these hot tears, and that scared, pleading

look, tell me this ugly, overpowering spasm of weakness has frightened you. My dear boy, I see you are but a child in thought and strength of endurance, and I am indeed loth to leave you. Even in disease and weakness, for your sake I would willingly remain some years longer in this weltering state of poverty.'

'The pain at my heart is going away now,' Robert replied, getting his father some cake and wine. 'The first sound of your voice made me better, and all the fear left me. When you could not speak I was fast going mad. If that be dying, it must be a dreadful thing to die. I tried to be brave and heroic as you told me, but I cannot; so do not tell me any more of heroes, and how to stand still and see men and women suffer as you did. Every time I see you suffer I will roar and cry. I cannot tell you what I thought when all the beautiful light I love to see went out of your eyes, and your face, which to me is like the sun, changed until I could not look on it. Father, I tried to believe in all you told me, and I cried to God to come at once and make you all right. I don't think I will ever love God and trust in Him as you do. To me He is not good, and almighty, and kind. He must know we are poor and alone, and yet He allows disease and death to come and make us still more miserable and dependent. When you were well and could work, we were not dependent on alms. Death must be like the devils that entered into the people Jesus cured, because you were foaming at the mouth and fearful to look at. I wish I had never been born, and I hate the idea of growing old and living on beggar's bread. If I was like God Almighty, I would have no death nor old age, unless for awful bad people. Every summer I would paint the cheeks of all my creatures with new beauty, and always make them more beautiful and more youthful. Trees and flowers never grow old, nor yet green grass. I do not see anything to make life so grand as you say. It is a dull, hungry, miserable thing; for me at least it has no joy or beauty; and when you are gone, I will not trouble finding out anything about Planet X. God has not given me anything but you to make me think He is good, and now He is even taking you, and I shall hate Him. It is yourself, not your writings, I want; and Planet X, the heaven into which you are going, is so high I cannot understand how men and women can soar so high on clouds.'

'My poor boy,' the astronomer said, 'these are just child-thoughts and child-sorrows, and child-thoughts and child-sorrows are far more deep and real than most suppose. Childhood is as earnest as it is innocent, and if society were only half what it ought to be, all childhood would be lovely and free of sorrow. It is not God's fault, my dear boy, that you have no free, joyous childhood. It is contrary to His arrangements, intentions, and nature that thousands of boys and girls, in all cities and towns, are old and grey in heart before the play-time of childhood is over. These evils are all the result of unrighteous, selfish government, sinful land-entailed laws, and the soulless superstition of modern Christianity, in its blind respect for, and adherence to, sacraments and Sabbath-day religion, and in leaving the human body to welter in misery, and the mind to remain in bondage to tradition and the meagre inspiration of a book, instead of leading it into a knowledge

of the laws of its own nature, and into the clear sunlight of God's abiding presence. Directly all the evils of society are traceable to these and like imperfect legislation, and deluding and separating religious bigotry and sectarianism, and the selfish indifference and want of organization among religious leaders; and indirectly the poor and oppressed add to the weltering confusion by their own imprudence and debasing vices. Nay, directly, I might say, the poor rivet their own fetters; for no form of unjust government nor system of delusive priestcraft can remain longer than the toleration and support of the people. Only time and enlightenment, I suppose, will educate and emancipate the human conscience, and bring it back to its original dignity. There never can be equalization of property and power; but it is slavery more revolting and more stern in privation than that of the black negro, to be noble in soul and enlightened in mind, and have no outlet for pent-up energies; to be able and full of labour, and have no reward; to have messages of wisdom for the people, and find no publisher sufficiently brave to refuse to pander to public tastes; to be able-bodied and willing to work, and yet have to wander to and fro a miserable, starving beggar, and vast acres of land lying waste,—or, even worse, feeding fowl to be the cruel prey of wanton sport,—and millions of dry cash lying in banks, rusting for want of exchange. Robert, God allows all these evils, not because He is unwilling or unable to undertake for the poor and oppressed, or does not detest these workers of iniquity, but He waits in dignified repose for humanity to throw off its own curses, to discover its own needs, and find out its redemption; and that which we think wantonly lost and shamefully thrown away, He gathers in, and saves, and beautifies with His love and life. As you grow older, Robert, you will understand these things. At present, to such as you, life is indeed dark and stern, nay, almost a barren wild; and no canting prayer or repeated text of Scripture will make it any brighter, until you feel the genial sunshine of human love. Not until you feel the life of religion will you believe in its inspiration, and feel God is good. I did not expect that you would rise superior to the physical aspect of death, and I am glad you have seen a little of what may be; and now you will be more prepared for the pain of separation when the spirit you love recedes away, and leaves you with decaying, decomposed matter. In the after years you will remember all these sayings, and they will be to you wisdom and understanding, as well as fragrant memories. Even hard trial and stern poverty give to the mind wider views of what mind really is, and how superior it is to all these physical conditions. Your very barren childhood has made you sooner a man; and in the future you will not regret that you had no toys, no holiday excursions, when you find instead that you are far advanced in wisdom and understanding.

'Why do you always call me a mere child, father, when I inquire about God and life?' Robert asked; and the set, earnest expression of his tear-bedewed face and ill-arranged hair rendered him a touching picture of tragic misery. 'I am not a mere child—I'm twelve next birthday; and at my age Jesus was among the doctors, hearing their wisdom, and asking them questions. I often wonder what questions

He asked. I think, like me, He had not been pleased with what people say about God. If it is not God that makes the misery, and if He is displeased at the big, selfish folk who do nothing for poor people but build them infirmaries and poor-houses, to draw all their misery and disease into big cattle-sheds, I will live to fight them, and tear down every workhouse, and build in its place beautiful houses. When I am a man, like Jesus, I will go from town to town, telling the people not to support bad government men and ministers who tell lies about God. It is hard being a shabbily-dressed boy, glad of any lift, or a few papers to sell, and to hear the great big swells calling you a street Arab. I hate swells with big ulsters, canes, and stinking pipes. They're just like monkeys, and when they speak they crow and crow like a monkey when it is angry or begging for a bit cake. When I am a man, standing up for the poor, I will have a right pitch into swells for the impudence I got when selling papers.'

'Robert, you must not cherish revenge,' the father replied, amused at his son's contempt of the fashionable baboon of the present generation. 'Swells are innocent creatures to all but themselves. The swell is simply a big baby, come out to air fine clothes and ape the vices of men without imitating their virtues.'

'They may be innocent to grown-up men, but they are a terror to small boys, and I hate those sneaking, swearing swells,' Robert said, boylike, set on having a throw back at those more fortunate youths who had evidently enjoyed some sport at his poverty and importunity in trying to get his papers sold. 'In all the world, father, I do not find anything worth loving or living for, unless my dear father and kind, good Jesus. Jesus must have been a right out-and-out man, and a true friend of the poor. He was not afraid of kings and great folks, but they got hold of Him at last, and soon nailed Him on the cross. His very disciples were cowards, running away and leaving Him. When I read His life, I think I would just like to do as He did, even if I be nailed to a cross.'

The astronomer was rather pleased than otherwise at the spirit of his son. Often he had been afraid lest the spirit of the age would bear him down like a silly, driven sheep. Now, however, he was in arms; now that a proud spirit of righteous rebellion surged in his youthful soul, a noble revenge smouldered, he felt that over all encircling arms of opposition and injurious influences, he would make his way to the front as a reforming teacher. He had been wounded and scarred in his most sensitive recesses; for his nature was proud and passionate, and the cry of his soul was for revenge. Somehow, in the far future it might be; nevertheless, even if he fast and lie awake most of the night, searching for wisdom and seeking after the narrow way which leadeth unto life, he will stand a king among men, hurling out withering, eloquent declamation at the vices and wasteful extravagance of modern society. Somehow he felt every true man must be a very Christ indeed, with a noble work and a divine mission; and who shall say he had not caught the true meaning of that beautiful life?

'God speed you, my son. Yea, I feel He will, for He is ever on the side of the true and brave,' the astronomer said. 'If you do not find

Planet X, you will help to establish the kingdom of righteousness on earth ; and when your time to go up higher comes, your intact, individual soul will easily find its way amid the spiritual realities now hid by the veil of flesh. Let your revenge be noble and generous—that is, live to give good for evil by inspiring the youths of the next generation with a higher and holier life. Live to inspire within such a noble enthusiasm for all the higher arts, and especially the art of sober manliness. If you have a fling at these bullying swells, let your rebuke be with might and wisdom. Some think Jesus, under all circumstances, should have been meek and gentle, but all true love must ever and anon be severe ; and self-righteousness, and the flippant conceits of a little learning, a good social position, and a heavy load of secret evils, cannot be too severely condemned and held up to public scorn. I am indeed glad you are charmed with the life of Jesus. If ministers would not disfigure it with absurd theological doctrine, it is indeed a sublime, saving life. However, I believe for many generations yet the world will war and wrangle over His Godhead and the virtue of His blood ; but only when His pure manhood is lived and taught will the world be making rapid progress in the fine arts of morality and religion. Therefore be like Jesus, Robert,—walk with God, honour your conscience, rebuke evil wherever you find it, be forgiving to the repentant, open the eyes of the blind—that is, instruct the ignorant, set the oppressed free. That is, agitate for just and liberal legislation ; and by holy deeds, and wise, kind words, and a pure, heroic life, aromatize the air of heaven, and fill the ascending clouds with a pleasing sacrifice.’

‘Yes, father, I will study Jesus, and try to be like Him,’ Robert said. ‘I often wonder what books He read. I think it was flowers and birds that told Him of God. He was often away alone, and I will go away from everybody and learn from the roses, the lilies, the birds and bees. In the last novel we had of George MacDonald, I read it was a baby that redeemed the world. That is not true ; Jesus was a man, a man thirty years of age, before He began to redeem men from evil. Men and women who write books should be careful not to make people think wrong thoughts. I, too, will wait until I am old enough to have sense not to be angry at little things, then I will go about preaching against smoking and drinking and swearing, and every other evil. I suppose the people don’t know it’s a sin to do as they do.’

‘Brave, noble boy ! receive my blessing,’ the astronomer said. ‘You are right ; the redeeming of the world is no baby-work any more than doctrinal bargain-making, but real, earnest, hard work. Too many writers and preachers dwarf the life of humanity, and cut Jesus down either to a sentimental or mock-heroic standard. Yet His life all through was awfully earnest and hard, His heroism calm and mighty, and His submission to insult and agony that of a giant soul bent in reverent prostration before God and His truth. Blessed, indeed, was His mother, and blessed His smiling babyhood ; but these were only made blessed by the purity and devotion of His manhood, and His divine effort to draw all mankind into peaceful brotherhood, and one with the Spirit of the universe. Now, Robert, I am not sad to leave-

you, for I know the Spirit of God is within you, and He will give His angels charge concerning you.'

'I cannot be brave until I have conquered and won,' Robert said, opening wide his sharp, pensive eyes, as if trying to find out how he, a poor, half-fed, weeping boy, could be brave. He fancied he must be out in the battle-field with gun and sword, and knew not the hardest battles, as well as the divinest victories, are fought and won in secret; as men and women groan and bleed, as they slay the evil within them. 'I wonder if the swells in Jesus' time called Him names? I don't think He was ever so poor as be selling things on the street; but when He gave up working at the bench, and began teaching the people, they stoned Him. Perhaps they will throw stones at me too. Often, father, when you were sitting up late writing about Planet X, I have been lying awake thinking strange thoughts, and wondering why there is so much misery. It seems so strange that some have large houses and castles, and many, like us, shut up in narrow garrets with a small bit fire, and sometimes none; and it all appears so awfully funny that I grow sad, and my heart aches, and I cry and hide my head under the blanket, and wish I was dead, and buried deep, deep in the earth. Then shining light comes in, and I see a grand scene. Ah! so grand, I cannot tell you what it is like. Grand men and women, and clear, clear sunlight, and music, and there are no hungry-looking, dirty children. When I seem at a loss what to do, Jesus just comes out amidst the grand scene and takes me by the hand, and I see Him as plain as can be—just a great, grand man; and His eyes are full of love, and He bids me not weep nor feel afraid, nor think sad, weary thoughts, but just stick in and work like a man—just to work right through, as He did.'

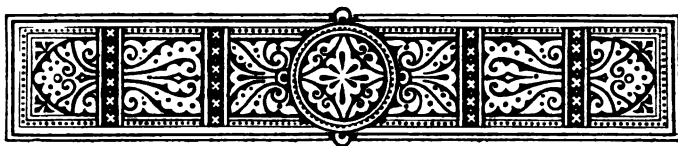
'Like all the wise and good, you are taught by Heaven,' the astronomer said, clasping his hands in adoring thankfulness. 'In early infancy you were deprived of a mother's love, and from the very first your lines have been in stony places, and I am now all the more delighted to know heavenly influences are entwining you, and drawing you away to feast your soul on hidden wisdom. When I am gone, you will be alone, yet not alone, for your heavenly Father will be with you. May that inner voice, that strange, mystic monitor, which baffles all atheism and philosophy, ever keep celestial watch in your conscience, and may it strengthen and comfort you when heart and flesh faint and fail, and you fall asleep, a poor, friendless orphan!'

'You are right, father, I am never alone,' the young astronomer replied. 'When I am by myself, there is always some one or something within me whispering a great many things, and I often answer it back, speaking aloud. Sometimes I don't agree with all it says, for it often tells me to bury myself, and keep down all my evil, high ideas. Then I get angry, and say I will not, and that my ideas are neither evil nor high; and then it answers back that I am a bad, stupid boy. Perhaps it is mother who comes and speaks, and wants me to be wise and good. I often wonder what like mother was, and wish she had lived until I was a man. If you go away, you will meet her in Planet X. Mind be sure and tell her I am wearying often to see her and hear her

voice. When you are gone, I will go once to a high, high hill, and have a long look at Planet X. Then I will know I am moving nearer to you, and will not weary. I will be so busy learning all how to be like Jesus, and preparing to convert swells from smoking, drinking, and swearing, and hanging about tap-rooms and hotels like big baboons. When I am peering through the telescope at the size and awful speed of that wonderful world flying through space, you must take a trip down on a cloud, and appear to me as Moses and Elias did to cheer Jesus. Although your face shine like the sun, I will know you. Even if you were in heaven a thousand years, I would know your eyes and voice, and your smile, which is far brighter than sunbeams. When you come down, be sure and tell me if you are an astronomer in heaven, and if the people in Planet X go away to another higher planet when they want another new body. Mind, also, and tell me what brother and sister are doing, and if mother ever speaks about me. Maybe Jamie will be painting pictures, and Lucy teaching music. Now see, father, you don't forget to tell me all that. Will you promise, father, to come down ?'

The astronomer sobbed aloud. Despite the brilliant conquests of his genius, the victory of discovery, and the spiritual enlightenment of a pure soul which had seen God, and found Him to be the completer of human happiness, yearning, weeping love rendered the valley and the shadow of death dark and desolate.

'My God, forsake me not in this the darkest and most trying hour of my life,' he muttered. 'Holy Author and Completer of my faith, send forth yet more light and truth to inspire fresh heroism ; for this parting hour, now so near, is indeed the Garden of Gethsemane, with its lonely agony and bloody sweat. It is no weak fear of the last convulsive throes of rending mortality, nor yet a creeping dread lest after all I lose my identity, and sink into the everlasting arms of a corporate mass of endless evolution. No, none of these fears trouble me ; for I know after worms feed on my remains of physical organism, my immortal part shall be dwelling nearer Thee, still joying in the sublime mystery of individual life, and still following after Thy footprints, ever thinking out Thy infinite thoughts after Thee. It is simply parting with our darling pets and enshrined beloveds that lends death a short, sharp victory and a biting sting. O Father God ! it is clinging, bleeding, dying love—the holy mystery of human love—which is breaking my heart and rending my soul with infinite anguish. It is love, sincere, deep, tender, trembling, anxious, sympathetic love for my poor boy, which will launch me amid the beauty and glory of perennial life, a weeping, sobbing sufferer, lost in the surrounding darkness of human error and evil.'



CHAPTER XIX.

ANGEL FACES EVER HOVER NEAR.



GENTLE tapping at the astronomer's door rather abruptly silenced his soliloquizing, and he suddenly smiled, as if he had seen the face of an angel hovering near. Perhaps they were familiar to spirit-rapping, for both father and son suddenly wore a cheerful, composed appearance. Wiping his tear-stained face, Robert almost leaped to open the door.

● 'How pale and worn you look, noble hero!' a sweet lady said. 'Ah! you are trembling and flushed with fever. Surely you are not worse than usual? I never remember seeing you like that. Before, I ever found you serene and hopeful as a summer morning. Robert, too, looks as if he had been weeping, and you too appear more than usually excited, weak, and worn. Do tell me what is wrong. Hide nothing from me, for you know I consider it no trouble to be of use to you.'

'My dear, angel-faced friend, I am indeed much weaker, and extremely restless,' the astronomer replied, clasping the cool hand of the welcome visitor, and kissing it with rapt admiration. 'I know my time here is fast drawing to a close, and I have been striving to have some earnest conversation with Robert. In the future he will recall all my present counsel; and although it be a sad task, I feel it my duty to prepare him, in a degree, for the coming exigencies of his position. Ah, my noble friend! with all our enlightenment, and faith in the fatherhood of Him who is encircled in light as with a garment, we cannot speak of separation without severe pain and sadness. It is a solemn, earnest thing to depart this life, even when we have in some measure wrought the works of Him who sent us.'

Rosa was weeping, and clasping the old man in her arms, she said, 'You do not need to tell me how hard it is to part with those we love. I feel I have been unpardonably neglectful in being so long in calling. Had I been here sooner I might have saved some of this suffering. The divine miracle of sympathy soothes the mind, calms reason, and heals the body. Do forgive me; I am heartily ashamed of myself.'

'Do not mention an apology, dear lady,' he said. 'Your past kindness is more than sufficient for eternal gratitude, but we love you so much we have indeed missed you. In this narrow room your smile is heaven's sunshine, and we grow petted and unreasonable. Love is seldom reasonable or logical, and as for philosophy, it casts it to the

wind, and dreams its own sweet life. For many a day you have been our all of earthly sunshine, and I believe want of you makes me mope and moralize. Reason and logic are all very well, and we bow before the searching intellect, and feel it is king of earth and heaven. Nevertheless, the affections must be fed, or the best part of our nature will remain dormant. Ah, poor, crushed, hidden love! how it pants for sympathy and reciprocity. We are social as well as solitary, and I think it is only gods and devils who can for ever dwell alone. I know there is a class of theologians who think we are only safe and pure in solitude and retirement, but the monk or nun's cell is often but a den of unclean spirits. Only by contact with evil and temptation can we know the strength or weakness of our nature. Not by running from evil, but by heroically fighting and overcoming, can we in reality be great and good. Not in preaching but in practice, not in praying but in loving, not in vowing but in performing, do we live and teach pure religion.'

'On all subjects you are as practical as profound,' she replied. 'I ever find our desires and ideas are very much alike. Like you, I think love and sympathy the best part of our being. I am sometimes ashamed of myself, I yearn so intensely for kindred love. If I fancy I have found a twin spirit, I at once set to worshipping their every fancied excellence, and, alas! I too often find I had simply thrown around them a mantle woven from my own ideal imagination. I am everlastingly called an idealist; nevertheless it appears to me every one's ideal, either morally or mentally, is simply the standard of excellence possible for them. However, seeing God should be sufficient to fill our entire souls, I suppose we should not be over anxious for kindred affinities.'

'True, very true, dear lady,' the sage replied. 'God should be sufficient for the soul, but we must remember how seldom the soul is sufficient for God. Only now and then can we enjoy rapt communion with the Infinite. Happy is the man or woman who can once in a year, or even in a lifetime, enjoy actual, close converse with the Eternal. Then in a few moments of time the blessed individual scales the divine steep of divine wisdom, and the experience is so peculiarly holy and sacred, and the gain so infinite, that for all coming time the sweet remembrance is a fountain of eternal life. However, there is a solitude which is neither solitary nor hurtful. For instance, the author seeks little of society (especially after he or she has seen behind the curtain, and seen the various actors in undress), simply because he or she is a sort of miniature society, revelling in their own creations. Only, however, in so far as they have apprehended the mind and will of God, and sounded the deepest wants in human nature, are they weak or strong to touch and move the inner soul of humanity. So, likewise, with the architect and artist; only in so far as these have real sympathy with the divine spirit of the Great Architect, and the conflicting passions of humanity, will their works be living, inspiring creations. We want inspiring buildings and preaching canvas,—not mere dead figures, however finely coloured, nor dead blocks of stone without the curves of mind and soul. There is, however, a class, dear lady, who are fearfully dependent on sympathy and social tenderness. I mean

the physically infirm, the morally diseased and mentally depressed, and the old and indigent. We belong to the first and last of these, and your noble sacrifice and love has been to us as the very presence of God. I often think on you, so young and self-forgetting. It must, however, be very trying listening to so much morbid complaining, witnessing so much real privation and actual suffering.'

'I certainly am often depressed as I wander up and down among so much real wretchedness and suffering,' she said, 'especially when I know it is the result of human error and injustice, and that if all were sober, thrifty, and industrious, there would be little left for civil government to do, save to devise wider scope for industry and enterprise. Misery and suffering enough, God knows, there is and to spare, in our golden land, with its gospel bells calling the people up to worship a God of dead doctrine. Passing along the streets, it is fearful to see the number of shivering, half-fed children who peer at you with dirty, old faces; and when I go farther I find hundreds of aged men and women huddled in unhealthy rooms, pinched with every form of privation, and afraid to complain for the more unnatural privation of the workhouse.'

'I knew these evils must prey on your sensitive soul,' the astronomer said. 'There are, however, many crooked places which are not easily made plain. Human progress has all along been slow, severe work; and not one, but thousands of redeemers, have shed, and will continue shedding their blood, before righteousness runs down our streets like a river. All the fire, famine, and horrors war invents, simply spread and increase the evil it seeks as a fine art to cut through. The mighty powers which cannot fail are, good for evil, wisdom for foolishness, love for hate, and knowledge for ignorance. Only by thus being and doing will individuals and nations grow toward perfected man and womanhood. Some ways we are undoubtedly a great nation; nevertheless, social science is simply creeping and crawling, offering a canting prayer and a trashy tract instead of the love of the heart and the sacrifice of a divine life; and engineering science is yet but a soul without a body, and not until it has murdered its tens of thousands will it learn the grand principles of strength, utility, and beauty. Ours is an age of haste to be rich, even if honesty go to the wall. We are penny-wise and pound-foolish; nevertheless, out of the wreck and ruin of our gigantic failures the next generation will learn to think more soberly, build on surer foundations, act more righteously, and live more religiously. The cheering consolation to all thinkers is the fact that the world, and the men and women in it, are moving on, and that amid manifold failures and blunders mankind is rising toward the spiritual, the true, and the beautiful. To-night I am, however, too exhausted for expressing what I feel in regard to the progress and prejudice of our times. Some other day, if I am left in the body, we will resume the theme.'

'Noble instructor!' she exclaimed; 'how much I owe you! How it pains me to see you so spent and worn! If you are really taken, I will miss you much, and grieve for you as for a father. I am your debtor to all eternity. To you I owe the spiritualizing of my most speculative thought, and the subjecting of all my powers to the divine

will. The truth is, I can never estimate what I owe you, simply because we can never compensate for noble thought and tender, true feeling. Like choicest honey dropping from the comb, your words of wisdom have been meat and drink to my weary soul. I was like a lost sheep in a bleak wild until I found your home and heart; and I have fed on your rare wisdom until I am in a degree like you.'

Tears blinded her eyes, and burying her face in the bed-clothes, she wept and sobbed. 'Ah! I *feel* you are dying, dear friend,' she continued. 'Already your face is of the dead; and its deep-set expression of transfigured sadness tells me you have suffered very much.'

'I like honesty,' he replied. 'You are right. I am dying, and that very rapidly; and unless for the sake of one, I cannot go too fast. With me the drama of human experience is nearly ended; and in so far as we fail in working out our ideal, so far is our life a complete failure. The opposition of prejudice and error has been sufficient to keep me in the shade of obscurity; but in thought and action I have steadfastly set my face to serve my generation, and now that I am old and worn-out, I am impatient to excursion into the eternal. Were it not for love and anxiety for Robert, death has no pain, and earth no pleasure. Even were it possible for us to become mere inanimate matter, the idea of ceasing to exist need not affect us so very deeply. If God can forget us, or, in His infinitude of creative resources, have no need for our individuality, we need not grumble at the arrangement. It is not, therefore, the mere idea of dying that affects a noble man or woman, but anxious concern for those we leave. For my own part, I long to meet the thing we call death with full consciousness. I wish to feel the hands and feet losing heat, and the defluxion of the vital organs rattling in the enfeebled throat, and to realize the immortal spirit gliding away on its milky path to Planet X. How vague and soulless is modern Christianity! Yet its Divine Founder ever spoke of God as a real, near, personal father, and heaven as doing the will of God, and the spiritual world as a real home, a house or country of large mansions. Material science is, in our day, a soul without a body, and Christianity a body or system of doctrine without a real, living, rational soul.'

'It is for me father is sorrowing and suffering,' Robert remarked, as he stood eagerly listening to every word. 'I am the cause of his grief at going away. Were I going up with him to Planet X, he would be very happy; but I don't seem ill or going to die, and he is killing himself with sorrow, wondering what will become of me. He hates ragged schools and workhouses, and fears lest the school or other boards put me into some of these places. My little wages will keep me; and in the evenings I can get lifts, and will manage some way.'

'Do not trouble, I pray, my dear father, over Robert,' she said; and her voice shook with emotion. 'When you are called away, I will look after your dear boy. I have no brother, and Robert will come to fill in the void. When he is in the prime of life, and I am tottering down the hill, he will be a strong staff whereon I can lean. I feel rich with the very idea. How poor, indeed, the generality of what we in ignorance call well-off people are, for want of enriching themselves by loving and providing for others!'

Robert listened with rapt attention and strange admiration; and as he listened, and gazed into the beautiful face of the speaker, he suddenly felt himself growing into a tall cedar, and a lovely ivy-plant entwining him round, and a queenly form crowning his life with perennial blessedness. Now he felt strong and heroic; now he wished to live, for life was sweet, and full of budding promise. It was not the cold, chilling voice of public charity, which prolongs existence to crush out all save servile dependence and stolid indifference, but the living touch of redeeming love. He now had a sister, and was a brother, and life had beauty and meaning, and he could allow his wearied parent to soar away to a brighter and more congenial world.

'Let us take hands on the agreement, young brother,' she said. 'If you do not run away and elude my love, I am your sister until life ends. I am an orphan, and know the experience you shrink from. I have neither father nor mother, sister nor brother, and believe God has given you to me.'

Never before had the astronomer's welcome visitor in any way adverted to her relationships or circumstances. All he knew was that she was a lady by nature, if not by birth, and living with an aged aunt. She had often given him considerable sums of money, and sent her maid with bundles of many good things, and he naturally concluded she must be well off. Once when conversing on Scotland, she spoke of a home in that picturesque portion of Great Britain; and he jumped to the conclusion she had her parents waiting and wearying for her return, and if she did not turn up exactly at the time promised, he feared she had been called away.

'Ah! you astonish me, dear lady, with your soul of cheerful heroism. I never conceived of you being an orphan,' he remarked. 'You often talked of Scotland, and especially Edinburgh, and I concluded your parents were there.'

'Would such were the case, and in a moment my life would assume a different appearance,' she said. 'With noble parents beating the breakers ahead, the child experiences heaven down here. I am, however, selfish in grudging my parents the more placid enjoyment of eternal blessedness. When adverted to a home in Edinburgh, I was merely recalling a happy past, merely lingering on joys that were and are not. My beloved parents are both in Planet X. Somehow I always regard heaven as very near and very real, especially since you revealed the home of the sinless to be one of those seen, actual, huge worlds rolling in space. When we think, reason tells us spirit must have individual expression and a real place for individual activity, and that the world or abode of the departed can be no vague, nameless myth, but a great and grand reality, moving in the harmonious order of solar systems. Together the spirits of my parents are enjoying the diviner life in that world. Their mouldering dusts, however, dwell widely apart. The mortal shell of my mother ripens beneath the burning rays of an Indian sky, and father's amid the luxuriant floral beauty of the Grange Cemetery of Edinburgh. Some other day, however, I will narrate to you all the incidents connected with my past history. Now you are in need of absolute rest; and my cousin and a French general

are living with us, and I am more limited in time than usual. To-day they have gone after some field sport, and I am making a run to overtake some work.'

Going to a table, she emptied a bag of good things, and giving Robert instructions how to make beef-tea and other light soup, she inquired if her maid had been with the clean linen.

'Yes, my lady, Jane brought it last night,' Robert said. 'It is in the box at the foot of the bed. Oh dear! we had almost forgotten to thank you for the nice fruit you sent; father enjoyed it very much. When Jane gets married to the goldsmith, she will be, like you, a friend of the poor. She knows how to cure disease, and can teach the poor people how to cook and be clean. She says all disease is the result of dirt and ignorance.'

'I am indeed pleased to hear such good opinions of my maid,' she said. 'Now we must get father out of bed, so that I may leave him more comfortable.'

In a few moments the astronomer was seated in a high-backed chair, and his bed made white as snow, soft as heather-bloom, and sweet as a garden of roses.

'Will I help you in before going, or would you rather sit for a time?' she inquired, tenderly laying her white hand on the old man's shoulder, and looking wistfully into his anxious, pallid face.

'Yes, dearest angel-friend, help me to bed,' he faltered, and a great tear ran over his thin cheek—a tear such as is wrung from strong men once in a lifetime, a tear of love and gratitude sent up from a swollen heart, melted and awed at the mysterious fulness of its own mystic infinitude of love. 'Already I am faint and longing to be laid down. Dear lady, not only human life in the total, but even our very individual soul is a mystery which requires eternity to develop its latent powers. When we think we are superior to all emotion, and have completely conquered all our passions, a word, a voice, a tender glance, or the touch of a hand opens the sealed fountains, and we are thrilling and throbbing with a mystery of undeveloped passion. Life is a grand, solemn mystery; but all that remains for me on this side the grave is helpless dependency. With a feeble cry of helplessness we enter life, with a sort of grateful surprise; and in most cases leave the stage with a more sorrowful because more conscious cry of travailing sorrow.'

'Perhaps it is excess of pride, but I have a shrinking horror at the feebleness of old age, and the helpless prostration of long illness,' she replied. 'I am, however, willing to endure any amount of pain, if all through I could retain full power of all my members. When my time to depart comes, I trust God will in mercy call me suddenly. Not that I wish to be cheated out of the idea of dying, or to escape pain, but simply to avoid being a useless dependant on another's tenderness.'

'Yours is a noble wish, and I doubt not but that your heavenly Father will respect your desire,' he said. 'I fully understand your feelings, and know from experience few if any could nurse your sensitive soul as you have nursed others. As part reward for noble work, some evening or morning, after your work is done, God will call you suddenly, even while you are arranging your shining hair, and breathing

some yearning prayer for the redemption of mankind. Of a truth, you must often be overwhelmed viewing the fearful results of drunkenness and sensualism, and the rank selfishness you must daily meet with among the upper classes, and the mock insincerity of Sabbath-observing Christians. Be brave, however, and serve your generation, leaving the results to God, never doubting but that your work is noble and divine. Like the cadence of heavenly song, your healing, inspiring presence is a joy real and abiding to many, and in my bleak, narrow horizon you have been flooding sunshine. God bless you, fair lady; work on, and when you are weak and faint, feeling, like Jesus, alone and exceeding sorrowful, nestle more closely in God's fatherly love, and, as the German poet says, "Silent heavens above, and silent graves beneath, will sing of God, and call work work." Only in work do we find life. Even if defamed and opposed, work on for the bringing in of righteousness upon the earth, and in Planet X you will receive a full reward. There love despised and crucified, goodness misunderstood and reproached, and genius neglected and crushed out, philanthropy chilled and hemmed in (because free of doctrinal limitation as the heart of God), will live and revel in a continual feast of unmixed blessedness. There the human mind and soul bloom and blossom in growing perfection, and, going from strength to strength, still follow after the footprints of deity, ever feeling that good, and only good, perfect, and infinite dwell in Him in whom we live and move, and from whose centre of life we draw our individual existence.'





CHAPTER XX.

A TALE.

THE grasp of her hand and the look of tenderest veneration told how deeply Rosa prized the stimulating words of the astronomer; also how sorry she was to go away, haunted by a fear that perhaps never again would she listen to his wise sayings, never again feel carried far from earth and above death by the wonderful light of his inspiration.

‘Do not let Miss Anderson away, father, without telling her of the poor woman in Drury Lane,’ Robert said, looking pleadingly into his father’s face. ‘Don’t be angry at me, but we must tell her.’

‘I really wonder at you, Robert, especially knowing that our dear friend has been impatient to be gone for the last half-hour,’ his father replied. ‘This is not the time, my boy, to press new cases of distress on the dear lady’s attention. You make me ashamed of you.’

‘Father, I promised to send her help, and had you seen her, you would never tell me to think shame for pleading her cause,’ Robert replied, and his trembling accents told how deeply he felt. ‘I am as sorry as can be to trouble Miss Anderson, but I don’t know any other, and I cannot get sleep by night nor rest by day thinking on that starving woman.’

‘Never mind father, and tell me all, Robert dear,’ Rosa said. ‘You could not, even if you tried, be rude, therefore tell me the story of the woman, who and what she is. You are a brave lad, standing up for the absent.’

‘I cannot tell you,’ he replied; ‘father must. The moment I begin my heart swells, and I cannot speak for choking.’

‘Very well; father, let us hear. You have been too hard on Robert,’ she replied, turning to the astronomer. ‘My time is neither so precious nor so limited but I can turn aside and attend to the necessities of a suffering fellow-creature. Now that I have heard that Robert has some haunting ghost, do you think I could go home to eat and make merry with the knowledge of a dear sister pining in want?’

‘Forgive me, noble lady. I now see I was far more unkind in endeavouring to save you than in revealing the truth,’ he said. ‘The story is this. The other day, as Robert was going from his dinner to his work, a voice cried to him from a window in Drury Lane, “Come, boy, for God’s sake, and give me a penny to get bread.” He, poor

boy, had no penny; but he went to the woman, and in a miserable hovel a still more miserable woman told him she had been watching him for weeks, and that she judged from his expression that he was familiar with sorrow, and also of a kind, tender disposition. Now, she said, I am simply desperate, and have called on you to beg a penny, for I am simply dying of sheer starvation. If you have a copper, one mouthful will lend me power to die, and in the grave I will for ever cease this weary troubling. Dear, pensive-eyed boy, I am wearied for rest, wearied tossing to and fro, wearied to be hidden fathoms deep from all the noise and bustle of this chaotic scene of sense and sin. Robert darted off without speaking. He had no penny, and the poor woman's appearance and words frightened him and nearly broke his heart, and he came home to share our stock with the famishing. When he got to the street he thought the clouds were black, and had come down to crush him out in revenge for her life. Trembling all over, he told me the horrifying revelation in incoherent sentences, and gathering together a little of all we possessed, he was soon speeding on his errand of mercy. When he got back, he found her sitting on a miserable bed, vomiting blood, and moaning so heavily that he thought her dying. In a corner of her room he found a few bits of coal, and soon had fire and boiling water. While he was thus employed, she never lifted her head nor spoke; but when he offered her the warm tea and bread, she ate greedily, and thanked him in such low, sweet accents that he thought she must be some angel. Putting her hand on his head, she blessed him, and bade him thank the Great Being who called this world into order and peopled it with life, that he had not been left to curse the day of his birth. Robert was awfully sad to leave her, but he had no choice. A poor message-boy, with an infirm father living on charity, could do no more. In this you may not agree with me, dear lady; however, outside real starvation, I think the most touching misery is that of a boy or girl prematurely old through too close connection with stern privation. Like my poor boy, there are far too many throughout the land old and sad, wearied and worn before the green bud has unfolded into an opening leaf. All large cities and towns have many tragic scenes of wretchedness, and I think the most woful of all are aged boys and girls, grey in heart and tottering in limb, made old and withered in a few years by the hot pressure of poverty and misfortune.'

'I fully agree with you,' she said. 'It is indeed woful to witness sunny childhood robbed of its brief time of natural cheerfulness. Standing at the corners of streets, driving a hard bargain for a few coppers to prolong their dreary existence, these unwashed, ragged children appeal most pathetically to our pride and prejudice. This sad tale of the poor woman Robert has found, is but another of the many dreadful discoveries which annually come to view. How will it all end? This is no solitary case, and the mistake is the day's indignation is allowed to pass away, and our rotten poor-law system and sectarian charities blunder on. Sometimes I question if our age be in reality great for anything but cunning, clever selfishness. If you can spare Robert for a short time, we will go at once; and may Heaven forbid that I am

again to witness a scene which, with many more, will for ever remain engraven on my memory with blood. When I read in the daily prints of this one and that found dead for want of sufficient food and clothing, I feel there is something far wrong somewhere. Yet how to get at the root of the matter beats me. One thing, even if we cannot divide the light from the darkness, we must work on, and vain complaints are just about as dangerous and deadly as standing still. Now we shall make our *au revoirs* and be gone.'

'You need hardly ask if I can spare Robert,' the sage said. 'Look at him, and you will see my desire, will, and wish. Good-bye, dearest friend, and may the God of peace go with you and abide with you.'

With or without leave, evidently Robert was determined to fulfil his promise to the friendless woman, and before Rosa had finished speaking, he stood, cap in hand, with the door half open. The night had closed in. It was misty and cold, and the pale light of the mystic moon was shaded by black, rolling clouds, and cold rain began falling in drifting showers; and the moaning wind played in the chimney tops, and wailed in crack and crevice, like demon spirits greedy for destruction. The philanthropists, however, felt secure in divine protection, and the fire of enthusiasm made their hearts burn within them. Only one fear made their hearts quake, the fear of being too late. Putting the hand of the young astronomer into her arm, Rosa threw part of her mantle over his thin body, and bade him keep close to her. The rain was drifting in their faces, and with the umbrella low in front of them, the adopted brother and sister hurried in the direction of Drury Lane.





CHAPTER XXI.

THE CONTRAST.

OUTSIDE the wind and rain were blowing bleak and chill, but within the spacious dining-room of Mrs. Aslawn the fire burned brightly—the warm damask curtains were drawn, and the crystal lustre shining with many lights. A rich, snow-white cloth edged with blue hung far over the large dining-table, which was richly loaded with silver and rare old china, sparkling and costly as the corresponding elegance of old oak furniture, heavy gilt-framed oil paintings, and massive mirrors, reflecting the whole like a delicately-arranged picture of harmonious completeness.

The august lady had almost regained her usual health and spirits, and was seated in the centre of the hearth, with her patrician features haloed with the sociality of racy humour, and dignified with the majesty of educated intelligence. As it was considerably past the dinner hour, they had left the drawing-room, but were lingering a little in the hope that Rosa would turn up. On the right and left of the worthy hostess sat her nephew, Henry Hamilton, and his friend, Monsieur Vance Chand d'Alby. Both of the said messieurs were verging on forty, and both characterized as handsome and prepossessing. They were, however, almost opposites in complexion, tastes, form, and opinions. Nevertheless, these physical and mental differences were in their case cementing influences of profitable friendship. Both hated echoes, and craved for the honest criticism which is health and marrow to the soul.

Hamilton was tall (but an inch and a half below Monsieur), and almost symmetrical in form, with an oval face and well-defined features, all expressive of learning and refinement, and beautified by lovely blue eyes, more cool and sparkling than studious and impassioned. In a word, the expression of his regular features gave evidence of a mind which could take an intelligent and prudent view of things in general, and form a very reasonable opinion on philosophic subjects, with sufficient self-esteem to consider his own opinion about the best going. In feeling he was equally prudential, not easily led away, nor yet given to much ardour of expression. When he had made a friendship or a promise, he was faithfulness itself. His forehead was slightly bald, and his dark-brown hair curled closely round his slender neck. His walk, manner, and general appearance had more of the stiff precision of an

Episcopal parson than the artistic elasticity of a military officer. All his opinions, too, and inclinations leant to the Conservative side, and as a matter of course, his aunt considered him an ornament and credit to the society to which he belonged.

Monsieur Vance was six feet two, and inclined to corpulency. Nevertheless, he was graceful and noble in every movement, and his fine physical frame generally moved in harmony with the quick-varying expressions of his moods. His forehead was high in veneration, indicating a sensitive, poetic temperament; and the rapt expression of his spiritual face told his soul was often bent before some high ideal of divine beauty. His glossy black hair was artistically arranged, and his dress equally faultless, and expressive of refined taste. It might be, he carried his beautifully-formed head too high. However, he was every inch the soldier, and such an attitude was more the result of training than expressive of pride. Whatever his faults, Monsieur was destitute of vainglory or arrogance; and if his heart was empty and aching, it was overflowing with social tenderness. His complexion was somewhat swarthy, and his splendid black eyes, sometimes liquid and meditative, then commanding and stern, and again soft and wooing, then sad and pleading, possessed powers of attraction few could resist. His powers of mind, as well as the passions of his soul, were of no ordinary kind, and there was scarcely a study or a subject but he had in some degree mastered. His sharp-pointed nose lent a fine effect to his arched forehead, and its mobile sensitiveness seemed to scent out an idea, a story, or a secret of love or revenge, long before either the one or the other found decided expression. His neat-trimmed moustaches modified the intense firmness of his compressed lips, lending sweetness to the severity of his mouth. As a converser he was fluent and fascinating, but rather too hasty in forming friendships and opinions, and often, as a matter of course, found himself mistaken. Still, undaunted, his ardent impulses hurried him on in search of fresh discoveries, and in restless activity he found rest and solace. All his leading passions and powers were pure and aspiring, just and honourable in intention, but his impulses often made it appear otherwise. However, in all his defeats and experiences he was ever crying for more light, ever seeking for truer wisdom, and ever aiming after a nobler life. His love of nature was such that he could have roamed for ever in unfrequented retreats, studying the huge, mystic plan of creation, ever rapt with its ascending hymn of harmony, and made strangely happy watching the innocent, perfect life of the lower animals. It was, however, evident that his tour through England had some special object in view, and in visiting all localities of crime and social misery, and charity institutes, it was evident he was in search of some special object or information. Nay, it was often evident that some absorbing idea or sorrow was hurrying him onward with feverish anxiety. It was also evident that he was naturally of a gay disposition, with a vein of racy humour; and often when most mirthful and sparkling with wit, suddenly dark clouds would overspread his countenance, and, as if gasping for breath, he would press his hand over his heart as if to ease some acute spasm of mental or physical pain. At such times, the

expression of his eyes was both touching and terrifying, almost defying the most acute psychologist to say whether murder, remorse, or suicide haunted the chambers of the soul.

'Hamilton,' he said, 'I can bear this no longer. We must away at once, and search for our lost pearl. It is a dreadful night for Miss Anderson to be out, and it appears to me the perfection of unmanliness us sitting here enjoying a cosy fire, and that self-forgetting lady out in the storm.'

'You are right, Monsieur Vance,' Hamilton said, starting to his feet. '*Allons, allons*, let us get our overcoats at once, and go on a mission of knight-errantry.'

'Don't move, gentlemen,' Mrs. Aslawn said. 'Take my word for it, your gallantry would be entirely thrown away. This is only Rosa's old game, and she is as comfortable in mud as most are in satin. You must remember the dreary wilds of weltering poverty and social misery are as confusing as craggy glens and snow-covered mountains. Therefore the surest and quickest way to find your lost treasure is simply to remain where you are, and exercise patience. In all seasons that Utopian castle-builder goes her rounds, and what she is doing is known only to herself and those among whom she labours. However, at this time she might have had more respect for our visitors than absent herself so long. Monsieur, every day you will more and more discover that my niece is a strange sort of person, full of eccentricities. For as long as we have lived together, I cannot say I really understand her. The truth is, she is better known to the night policeman than the society to which she belongs, and should exclusively adorn.'

'We shall certainly be guided by you, *ma chère dame*,' Monsieur remarked. 'Nevertheless, I confess I am unwilling to forego the rare pleasure of being of some use to that noble philanthropist. It may be unseen and unrevered by the world, but I feel convinced that Miss Anderson must be doing divine work, and in a very modest manner spending a great deal of money.'

'Spend, forsooth! if she could command it, she would lavishly give away until poverty, pauperism, ignorance, distress, and disease were mere black spots on the pages of history,' Mrs. Aslawn replied. 'However, she is no fanatic in regard either to political or social science, but seeks to inspire within every one a noble enthusiasm for self-help. To a great extent she traces a large percentage of our social wretchedness to reckless providence and drunkenness, and considers doctrinal Christianity a complete failure as a moral influence in lifting up the masses into more healthful and noble endeavour after righteousness. Ignorance, drunkenness, and the despondency of defeat and disappointment she regards as the three greatest evils of modern society. Ignorance is an easy prey to all sorts of evil. When men and women are enlightened they are like the gods, knowing good and evil. Thus ignorance is easily ensnared into drunkenness and vice through poverty of tastes and desires for the nameless enjoyments of literature, science, and art, and the sublimer joys which spring from communion with the soul of nature. The ignorant seek the vulgar joys and pleasures of intemperance and sensualism, while the disappointed and defeated, in too many

cases, for want of timely aid and earnest sympathy, sink into a state of mental and moral incapacity either to resist evil or to struggle after the good. She looks, however, to political science for considerable assistance in the way of trade encouragement, and the reforming of land laws, and protection from the employer to the employed by accidents through the imperfections of trade plant and machinery. She also considers it peculiarly the duty of Parliament to endeavour to prevent trade stagnation, simply because in all times of general depression and semi-starvation the numbers of those who are ever on the verge of pauperism are vastly increased. In a word, Rosa has a peculiar gift of seeing deeper than the surface of any person or subject. It is very difficult grasping the total of pauperism, and the immense sums of money annually collected and spent on the poor. However, Rosa in some way goes round and round the whole complex problem, and does not hesitate to condemn the entire poor-law system as a gigantic failure, and especially the workhouse and poorhouse system of protection to the indigent and aged. All these she regards as mere temporary measures, fast ripening for sweeping reformation. It may seem strange in such an advanced thinker, but she also repudiates compulsory education, and the truth is, she believes in no compulsory measures. Educated starvation she considers the perfection of cruelty. Natural ignorance, with plenty to eat and manifold surroundings of beauty and healthful life will, by some means, attain to and aspire after a degree of rational intelligence, and force its way up to very communion with the great source of knowledge and wisdom. But educated starvation and misery render childhood an aged, miserable monstrosity, and matured man and womanhood sullen, cynical, atheistic, and misanthropical. It is contrary to popular opinion, nevertheless Rosa thinks it is more Christ-like and humane to leave the street waifs to roam in untutored grandeur than force them into children's churches on Sundays to teach them of God and heaven, and yet leave them six days in every week to battle unaided with poverty, starvation, and all the appalling misery of disease-engendering closes full of festering sensualism.

'I fully agree with your noble niece,' Monsieur replied. 'It is, however, one thing to see and lament over evil, and another and more difficult thing to devise radical means calculated to bring about a better state of things. From what I can gather, your poor-law is a gigantic fraud, robbing the grumbling tax-payer, and merely feeding and fostering a chronic chaos of pauperism. Not an intentional fraud by any means, nevertheless all the same a fraud, in that it drains honest industry to feed improvidence, intemperance, and crime. You are a dreadfully pious nation, in name at least and profession; and were your ministers and mighty host of intelligent and wealthy office-bearers to be less sectarian and more social, less superstitious and more Christian, you would require no draining poor-rates, neither would you have human beings living like moles in smoky garrets and damp cellars, and no such thing as homeless street waifs and loitering idleness. Whatever your Sabbath-day theology or peculiar ideas of litany or ritual, there should be a six days' common Christian platform or organization of social science, where the honest atheist, the devout Romanist, the

ritual Episcopalian, the intellectual Unitarian, the evangelical Presbyterian, and the speculative theist can all join in finding employment for the idle, in organizing building societies, in reclaiming the intemperate, in educating the ignorant, and relieving the indigent, and thus in a sort of rational way endeavour to stamp out poverty, and breed within the weltering classes a desire to work out their own salvation. With all your name for a religious people, I am astonished to find that in most cases the poor, and especially the fallen and unfortunate, are considered only fit for a dog's place and crumb. The truth is, I am every day more and more impressed with the grace and patience of your poor, and especially their quiet orderliness during election times. Since I crossed to England I have been in houses, or rather hovels, where hungry men and women accept a tract and a canting prayer with a reverent submission and enduring heroism which has silenced me with rapt wonder and admiration, and made me exclaim that at heart such men and women must be good and great, and it seems to me a disgrace to your Government to render such a mean return for such loyal patriotism. You may not like a foreigner to tell you, nevertheless your fifteen millions of workmen are homeless. They have hovels of disease, and all manner of indecent privations; but sweet, pure homes, around which the holy breath of heaven blows, they have not. Will their children's children receive a diviner inheritance? Theology is not religion. It neither worships God nor blesses humanity; and whatever the future of Christianity,—and it is evident it is passing through a severe ordeal,—I am convinced your sectarianism, with complex illogical and irrational creeds, with fast-day and Sabbath-day piety and week-day selfishness, is not the religion Jesus lived, taught, and died for, any more than it is a manifestation of God as a beneficent parent, delighting in the joy and happiness of all His creatures. It may sound harsh and unpleasant, nevertheless your Protestant Presbyterianism is but a revised code of the Romanism you so condemn, without its unity and consistency.'

Mrs. Aslawn reflected, and seemed in no hurry to reply. Perhaps Monsieur's remarks had rambled too far into forbidden ground. Or it might be she inwardly felt he had expressed truths not less true than sad, and that if such was really the nature and position of churchism Christianity, Rosa might be right in her freethinking, and that if right, she might often be bearing in secret many heavy burdens; and that a deep stratum of infinite sorrow might ever and anon make her overcharged heart ache with a dry, consuming pain, and (like the Man of Sorrows) her lonely spirit might often be exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death.

As if intuitively reading the inner thoughts of Mrs. Aslawn, Monsieur continued, 'Despite all her outward cheerfulness, I fear so much close communion with real misery and privation must tend to sadden the inner springs of Miss Anderson's life. I am sure it would unfit me for all healthy, active work.'

'It is long since I knew Rosa seldom if ever allows her face to be a correct index to her feelings,' Hamilton replied; 'and if we judge from her general appearance and behaviour, her mission work hangs very lightly on her even-balanced mind. Whatever her inner strata, she is

always the sunshine of the house, as well as of all company she honours, and her clear, musical laugh is quite stimulating; it sets one's blood aglow, and is a medicine to a wounded spirit. We shall therefore conclude that, as a philanthropist, Rosa sees and learns more than she suffers or reflects. The truth is, I believe my eccentric cousin heals hearts, lessens poverty, whitewashes filth, forgives crime, and sympathizes with suffering and misfortune much in the same manner as the medical doctor considers and heals diseases; the only difference being, the latter lives by his art, whereas the former labours for love.'

'Excuse me, dear Hamilton, but I am inclined to think you have formed a very incorrect opinion of your fair cousin,' Monsieur replied. 'From what I have seen of Rosa, her feelings, temperament, and intensity of real sympathy, forbid me accepting your conclusions. I grant that her enlightened views of God's nature and attributes, and her intelligent faith in His fatherhood, must help to keep her mind calm and her heart strong; but the very knowledge that most, nay, all of our chaotic misery is preventible and not according to the will of God, must of necessity make the good and sympathetic intense sufferers. To me it appears her seeming cheerfulness is but another beautiful expression of her noble self-denial. It seems greater philanthropy to be cheerful with the gay and happy than to mourn with the sad. It may be Rosa's melodious laugh, so catching and inspiring, is a sanctified sob vocalized, and her sweet smile a holy, hopeful reflection of her ever-present vision of a new earth, when humanity has overcome all the curses of superstition, ignorance, and selfishness.'

'Judging from your remarks, Monsieur, your main object in visiting England seems to be to criticize, and that in a very ironical and unjust fashion,' Mrs. Aslawn remarked; and it was evident that on reflection she had made up her mind to let Monsieur see she was anything but pleased with his plain speaking. Truth, she granted, was beautiful, but it was not always beautiful to expose the all of truth, and her Conservative feelings were shocked at his want of taste. 'One fearless Radical in a house is more than sufficient, and I do not know how it will be possible for us to get on with two, especially seeing you French are characterized with extremes in all your fancies and foibles. After all, it is rather amusing to hear a representative of the immoral court of France moralizing like a Dr. Begg on the vices of British society.'

'Pray forgive me, *ma chère dame*,' Monsieur replied; 'if I have touched on tender sensibilities or intruded on delicate ground, I am indeed sorry. It may be I have exhibited bad taste. However, considering that I am not exactly perfect in English conventionalism, I trust you will extend to me a more than usual amount of charitable forbearance. Plainness of speech and earnestness of intention are characteristics of my people, and I can assure you I had no mean or ignoble motive in thus plainly adverting to some of your more outstanding deformities. On the contrary, as a whole I admire your country, and from the bottom of my heart wish France could arrive at something like your stability in government and steady progression toward more just and righteous legislation. If I mentioned your black spots, it is because I believe the country which has done so much can and will do a great

deal more. It is evident to the most casual observer that the Church must exert herself if she would hold her own as a teaching, inspiring power. On every side the human mind has outgrown her creeds and beliefs as the full-grown man outgrows the dress of the boy; and if it will not let go its old traditions and sheets of dogmatic bigotry, it might unite in charity, and be one with mankind in humanityism. In a word, it might care a little for the needs of the body, and join with the humane atheist in striving to make heaven on earth, and with sublime grandeur of trust and dignified composure leave the future of everlasting punishment and reward to the goodness and wisdom of God. You are rather hard on French morals. However, we need arousing and spiritualizing; but I trust our day of devotion to the highest good is coming. Once we dethrone this bloody, unscrupulous emperor, we are done with the barbarism of imperialism. Once we have a consistent, enlightened, intelligent republic, willing to be moderate, wise, and patient until our outlying provinces and the centre of the people are educated for self-government, who shall limit the triumphs of France in science, art, industry, and all that goes to make a nation great and good? When enthusiasm for learning, for commerce, for industry, for God and good, take the place of military bounce and the insane enthusiasm of military renown, we will be a nation worthy of veneration. By virtue of our natural vivacity, brilliant enterprise, glowing enthusiasm, elegance of home comforts, love of the beautiful, and ingenuity in invention, France must exalt herself, turn her war instruments into reaping machines, paint beautiful pictures of peace on earth, and thus purge away her loose immorality, and earnestly invoking the spirit of divine inspiration, she will become the centre of civilisation and the nursing-mother of humanity.'

'I trust we shall not condescend to fall out over mere nationalities, Monsieur,' Mrs. Aslawn said. 'You have drawn beautiful pictures, and suggested splendid schemes whereby your country is to become the fairest and first. However, I have no faith in fine theorizing. Like all Liberals and Radicals, you trace all evil to monarchical or imperial government. If you were, however, a little more reasonable and rational, you would find we never heard of the hundredth part of social evils before Liberalism, and especially Radicalism, began to be regarded as respectable forms of opposition to wise government. Therefore, I very much regret to know, Frenchmen on the right and left are catching up the rabble cry of democracy, and God only knows what the end will be. In His holy Book we read that in the latter times Satan was to be let loose to try the faith and patience of the elect; and it is evident we live in these times, and that the devil is now going to and fro in all nations, tempting men to deny God and believe in their own self-sufficiency. You have been adverting to special forms of evil which have come under your notice, but I do not wonder you find our country overrun with all forms of revolting evil. The reckless Government, which is fast gaining popularity, is fit for anything. What can we expect from a Government whose leading power is miserly hoarding of money it has not the intellect to use, which seeks to reduce all religious authority to that of the depraved conscience, that tolerates atheism,

and seeks to abolish the House of Lords, and even countenances Sunday railway travelling, and questions the very authority of the Bible as a specially inspired book? The lower classes, however, have themselves to blame. It is these, and these alone, who send profane innovators to Parliament. If the working classes will support trades unions and myriad other organizations of powder magazine, of riot, anarchy, and rebellion, and by ignorant compulsion create wars between the weak and strong, and throw trade out of the country, and shroud their homes in poverty, disease, and death, what cares our grand old Constitution? The strong and wealthy can wait until the starving beg for bread and the rebellious seek pardon.'

'I believe your last sad conclusion is a true one,' Monsieur replied. 'I believe your monarchical government cares very little for general sorrows, so long as by hook or crook, by falsehood and fraud, it can secure its power, extend its borders, and wallow in luxurious extravagance. I cannot say I fully understand the good or evil of trades union, still, it appears to me, if such were intelligently conducted, and had more bye-laws and exceptional rules for special cases, it would be a wise and necessary protection. However, in all relationships, either of states or various branches of trade and commerce, I consider mutual agreement and mutual concessions the best policy and highest morality. I never considered that Liberalism was aiming at the destruction of one part or parcel of true religion, but is certainly seeking to clear the social atmosphere of cant and superstition, and to make the people realize that every day is a holy day, in which to abstain from evil and do all possible good. You say it is Liberal and Radical reformers who have revealed myriad forms of evil before unheard of. That fact of itself proves the purity and soundness of Liberal and Radical politics; only light can chase away darkness—only goodness, beneficence, and righteousness visit the oppressed, and seek to set them free. It was the special business of Tory politics to keep very quiet over your background of weltering misery, and by every conceivable means to brag and bluster, and so hide the festering cancer. It is a friend who cuts deep into a putrid wound; and progressive Liberalism is letting in fresh streams of education on your dark dens, and by probing deep into the smouldering energies of the human soul, letting out the diseased matter of chronic evils. In short, it is a true earnest of the beauty and worth of real Liberal principles this exposure of hidden evils; it is an evidence that it is the salt that can penetrate into the very centre of misery, injustice, and squalid ignorance. You also seem to think we are living in times when God has let some almighty monster of evil loose. It appears to me we do not require the interference of a special devil. Without the aid of that defamed, deformed lord of the bottomless pit, we have devils enough going to and fro on the face of the earth. For instance, our emperor is an incarnate devil, cool, deliberate, and bloody in all murderous unrighteousness; and your Tory leader is his cousin-german in unprincipled adventure and selfish ambition. The truth is, were it possible for a special devil to be summoned or sent into our world, he would be nowhere, and would blush with a sort of real devil shame at our sneaking cowardice in committing our most

iniquitous wrongs in the name of Christianity, and in covering our cloven feet with the mantle of holy orders.'

'It would appear as if my Radical niece was making wide inroads on Romanism, Monsieur, when you can thus cut and slash at priestcraft with its unscrupulous popedom,' Mrs. Aslawn said, evidently much amused at Monsieur for using her own argument for the condemnation of her policy. 'Judging from your lax sayings, you are fast steering away from the cardinal doctrines of the Holy Church, and being attracted by the subtle poison of atheistic secularism. However, considering the low standard of your national morality, and especially of the generality of your women, I do not wonder that you are a sort of inconsistent jumble of the superstition of Romanism and the flippant scorn and scepticism of Voltaire.'

'Well, I confess a true representative of either the former or latter is certainly not a very beautiful character,' Monsieur replied. 'However, I shall not quit my position, nor yet lose temper, even if you be severely personal. I know, like the best of nations, we have many faults and rough edges requiring planing down. It may be France is less canting and conventional in its manners and maxims than you English; and when you specially advert to our women, I do not think, as a whole, they exert the same ennobling influence as the more educated and virtuous of British women, who are taking the lead in female emancipation, and distinguishing themselves in science and art, and also in the divinest of all arts, that of healing the sick and educating the ignorant. However, our immoral women sustain a sort of pride or chaste womanliness of feeling along with contempt of more correct principles, and seldom descend nearly so low as the fashionable, broken-down professional in vice of London or Edinburgh, and other large British cities, who generally end by committing suicide by the tragic torture of constant drinking and exposure at street corners. The more we reflect, and sail outside of prejudice, we find most nations have more to blush for than boast of; and the man who blackens a woman's soul, and coolly plans to lead her into the vortex of sin, should be treated as a criminal. Strange perversion of nature! In woman is our hope and joy, and I believe no man ever seduced one of these fairest of earth's creations without finding he had wantonly thrust a sword into the very marrow of his manhood. With all my lax opinions, I am a lover of and a believer in woman as the hope of coming ages. When I think on a future when the majority of women will be educated and enlightened, pure and brave, generous, and all shining with emanations of heavenly wisdom, and permeated with enthusiasm for goodness, the vision becomes so transcendent that the grandest flight of fancy and the sublimest pathos of language fail to give anything like a proportional conception of a world cradled in peace, and actively progressing in all the perfections and infinitudes of mental and moral excellence.'



CHAPTER XXII.

DINNER AND AN ADDITION.

WEARIED waiting, Mrs. Aslawn ordered dinner to be served, and when the savoury, tempting viands were uncovered, Hamilton asked a blessing which would have done credit to a Free Church parson; and when, instead of an orthodox 'amen,' Monsieur made a cross over his forehead and chest, a sort of comical sneer rippled over the patrician features of the august hostess. Deep as was her love for and trust in her prudent, Conservative nephew, she was troubled in soul to think he was cherishing an endearing companionship with such a 'dangerous man.' Rosa's evident regard, too, for Monsieur was another cause of anxiety; and between the one and the other the old lady was more restless and troubled than she cared to admit. It might be unjust, nevertheless she had a growing dislike for the French general. Some indefinable suspicion haunted her that a black secret coiled round his moody, morbid soul, and that much of his fine speeches were mere artful masks. He might be a runaway convict, or mere adventurer. It was not the first time such foreigners had imposed on aristocratic society under the assumed name of some person of rank. However, with all her ingenuity she could not prevail on either her nephew or niece to share in her suspicions, and, as a matter of course, she had simply to tolerate his presence. At other times she felt she was unjust as well as ungenerous to her guest, but do as she might, she could not regard Monsieur save with feelings of aversion. Filled with such thoughts, and annoyed at Rosa's absence, Mrs. Aslawn was in anything but a good humour, and the dinner was anything but a success. To the infinite relief of all parties, Major Wray was announced, and with a face beaming with genial welcomes, the venerable hostess had him seated on her right. Then smiles, like summer sunshine, haloed her face. The Major was a Tory, and a friend of her dear departed brother, and the very sound of his hearty laugh made her heart vibrate with new-born vigour; and his melodious voice, acting like a magic spell, made her countenance grow youthful as her ripened soul. According to her mind, the Major was every inch the gentleman. No matter how many of the commandments he had broken, he had been cunning and secret in his omissions of duty and commission of evil, and was ever fully alive to the advantages of birth and position, and was therefore fully entitled to the distinction of

modern gentleman. By rather too marked attention, Mrs. Aslawn let it be seen she considered the Major the lion of the evening; and regardless of Monsieur's feelings, she plunged off into a sort of private and pleasing conversation on events and families only known to themselves. Hamilton was annoyed, and all the more because he knew it was intended. His aunt's nature was proud and self-willed, and he knew she had not forgotten that Monsieur had spoken fearlessly against her cherished prejudices.

'So, so,' he inwardly mused, 'my large-souled aunt can actually allow party spirit to lower her better understanding. The longer I live the more intensely I hate all party differences, and wonder why it is people cannot meet and enjoy life, and all the love and intelligence of one another, without getting angry at nonconformity. If the world must move on, it stands to reason that it cannot always run in one track; and if the mind be immortal and progressive, it is rank madness to expect it to believe in or accept any attained knowledge as the all that is to be known. Strange how some of the very best of men and women cannot imagine a higher intelligence than their own standard. Life seems a miserable scramble all through; and if this be the perfection of patrician and Tory intelligence and dignity, I am a sort of ashamed at claiming kindred with the ill-bred pack.'

'I had better tell you at once, Major,' Hamilton said, unable any longer to restrain his musing, 'that my worthy aunt and Monsieur have been merely measuring swords over nationalities and such like conceits. Comparisons are always hateful, especially among select friends. Although I am Conservative in all my tastes and feelings, I never care to see an opponent taken a mean advantage of simply because he or she may be sufficiently honest to use plain, unvarnished language when exposing our pet prejudices or festering evils. We are a small company, but I can tell you there is no lack of combatable forces inherent in our individualities. Therefore I trust you will be the leaven, making the whole into a light, prime condition. That is, I trust you are a great-souled, cosmopolitan man, with the world for your country, and God for your teacher, and the ether blue of space for the ceiling of your church.'

'Ah! so I have come in at firing-time? I thought as much,' the Major replied; and the boisterous ring of his amused laugh seemed to warm all hearts. 'Whatever has been the nature of the dispute, I at once say I will not defend too exclusive nationalities. We have simply to open our eyes to understand that the various discoveries of science, the speedy facilities of communication, and all other branches of commerce, are most conclusively indicating a time when all wide differences in manners, customs, laws, and general knowledge will be swept away, and the word "foreigner," or "unknown country," terms of no meaning. Even as it is, European nations are well mixed in marriage, and almost one in much of leading conventionalism; and the nearer the one draws to the other, it is found that one touch of genuine feeling makes all mankind akin. A few more generations and the generality of mankind will travel regularly to and fro through all European nations, feeling perfectly at home, and so educated that if not all of one language, all

will be able to understand each other; and in a few more generations, what we now call the uncivilized and barbarous portion of the earth will be justly governed, much better educated, and as a matter of course far more enlightened and enterprising, and the sandy deserts converted into cities and towns of science and art, and all industry will be fast foreshadowing the time when paradise will be restored. Without doubt, the place of one's birth will always possess a peculiar charm, and the major place in the mind; and a noble patriotism will make every individual strive to act so as to make his and her country the fairest and most beautiful in all divine graces.'

'You are a poetic prophet, Major,' Mrs. Aslawn replied, patting her favourite on the shoulder, and looking as if she really intended giving him a smacking kiss. 'After all, I do believe in the future nationalism will be greatly modified, and results, either for good or evil, which we cannot foretell, will spring out of so much enlightenment and speedy facilities of making enlightenment a sort of cosmopolitan property. It is indeed, as you say, a beautiful and natural feeling to love the land of one's nativity best, and to stand up for its honour and glory both by word and deed.'

'Patriotism, when intelligently understood and wisely adapted, is indeed a beautiful and noble feeling or emotion,' Monsieur remarked; 'yet the individual who can take the side of a less strong and more oppressed nation at the expense of being called non-patriotic, is, in my mind, a nobler being than the strutting, vainglorious patriot, for ever dangling the virtues or advancements of his own country on the notice of the stranger. I think the best manifestation of patriotism a man or woman can unfold is by the exhibition of personal character. The most rude naturally conclude that a noble, kind man belongs to a great country; but a mean, grasping oppressor, be he a prince with a courtly train, will hang a country up to contempt.'

'Would Rosa were here!' Hamilton said; 'for such beautiful cosmopolitanism would win her ardent support, and draw out some of her latent enthusiasm for universal redemption from all evil. If you gentlemen have failed to image the results, or conceive the activity, beauty, and grandeur of society in the future, after many rugged battles of reform have gained a decided ascendancy over evil and all injustice, my Miltonic-minded cousin would have drawn you a glowing vision—a vision so fairy-like, yet so real and beautiful, that our most glowing and rational ideas of heaven would find realization on this planet.'

'I declare we have actually begun seeing who will tell the best fairy tale,' Mrs. Aslawn remarked. 'However, in dress and many modes of living, we are in reality the fairies of our great-grandmothers; and it may be the future will reveal our present spiritual fairies in actual flesh and blood, painting sublimer pictures, singing and composing diviner music, and driving in carriages with a crest of holiness and justice. Life is a grand, sublime fact, even in its sorrow and suffering; and the man or woman who can lightly cast it aside, or even cant about it not being worth living, simply because it does not pamper all our conceits, must be in a lower state of insanity than has been discovered by the

most advanced psychologist. More or less, gentlemen, I can see you are all moulded and influenced by the spirit of your times, which is change. Even if it be from bad to worse, whatever you do, don't stand still or reflect, but on, on, is the order of the day. Of course you are all mere children compared to me, and cannot feel the increase of activity as I do. How strange it seems to me to sit here listening to conversation such as we have been indulging in, and compare it with that of sixty years ago !'

Tears stood in the dear lady's eyes ; and it was evident that faces and forms of the past were before her, and also that the mystic light of the silent and eternal was strangely breaking in, and that something told her she was soon, very soon, to be launched amid a blaze of more wonderful life, and anew to feel that the circles of eternal life are as wondrous as the wheels within wheels of the prophet's vision.

'I almost envy you your age and experience, dear lady,' the Major said. 'It must be a rare and pleasing reflection to know you have taken active part in two such epochs of human history. From your remarks, you seem to think my friend Hamilton and I are sorry Conservatives. I think you will admit, however, that the most consistent Tory would not dream of believing unconditionally in all the opinions and prejudices of a hundred years ago, or attempt denying the fact that new thoughts and fresh discoveries are changing the face of society, and breaking up myriad forms and barriers of caste pride and such like. Your lovely niece, I know, regards me as an antiquated, non-progressive relic of Tory pride and prejudice, still clinging to the exploded opinion that the Almighty made us of better material than the general masses, and intended us to ride right on to heaven in first-class carriages, all elected by divine grace. In the past I may have been mad enough to believe in some such absurdities ; but the chequered life of a friendless soldier empties the mind of such moonshine, and leaves an aching void in the warm heart. Foreign service and camp life take the conceit out of a man ; and the black man's sympathy is more precious than rank and title to a dying warrior, left for dead amid the conquests of the enemy. As I said, I am long ago emptied of all save a dead heart, starving for repose, sympathy, and love ; and reunion with the lovely daughter of my old friend is transforming my entire soul. Ever since our unexpected meeting I have been dreaming all sorts of Utopian dreams, and am convinced we all only know what we have been and seen, but very little of the future either individually or generally. It no doubt will appear absurd to an outsider, but I am now in turn spiritualist, social philanthropist, and dreamy, mystic poet, and all through the influence of a lovely, noble woman. Ah ! no wonder you cannot refrain from laughing, Hamilton. As an officer, a philanthropist is rather a phenomenon. But why should military men generally be spotted as destitute of mind and morals ? Barrack life unquestionably needs reforming ; and I think if a standing army be essential for all times, we might introduce many modes of reform even into the soldier's life.'

'Like you, Major, I go in for reform in the army,' Hamilton replied. 'For instance, the extravagance and so-called dignity of the mess-room

are useless waste, and keep a self-supported officer as poor as a church mouse. In these times of cheap café-dining it is really too bad to compel us modern, advanced Tories to abide by the old, beastly gluttony and extravagance of barrack-messing of fifty or a hundred years ago. If a man can dine healthfully on two shillings, why spend four or six? Our privates too should be allowed more encouragement in money, and in housing and supporting of wives. We ought to have all kinds of workshops, and the sale of our goods would enable the army to be almost self-supported. We all know that unless when out in active service, all ranks of soldiers waste a deal of time in semi-starvation and idleness; and in these times of rapid reform, barrack life should change its complexion. The Liberals have never as yet turned their attention in earnest to the army, save to cut down its expenses; and I know the popular idea among the more orthodox is, that the main business of a soldier is to be shot down like a hare, or to be tied up in barracks like a half-starved greyhound, ever in prime condition to hunt the black man over mountain and crag, and steal his cattle and large strips of ground to enrich our courtiers.'

'As touching self, I can see every man is a Radical,' Mrs. Aslawn said. 'The idea of converting barracks into paying manufactories and scientific colleges, and commissioned officers into prudent economists, is surely the newest discovery of the *survival of the fittest*. Nay, it may be that fifty years hence no one will be accepted into the ranks who cannot pass a scientific examination on astronomy, the theory of creation, and give some evidence of enthusiasm for the discovery of the missing link between the monkey and the man.'

The very servants in the kitchen caught the infection of the peals of laughter that issued from the dining-room, and felt sure their venerable mistress must be in one of her best moods.

'Since aunt is determined on being severely ironical on our ideas of barrack reform, we will change the subject, Major, and wait until we have a Tory Government before we introduce our bill. By the bye, Major, can you inform my friend, Monsieur, if the generality of British women are equally intelligent and patriotic with my aunt and cousin?'

'I do not profess to have anything like a universal or just idea of the general standard of British female excellence. However, I will venture to say Monsieur will travel two days' journey before he comes across another two to compare with our worthy hostess and her lovely niece,' the Major said. 'J. S. Mill regards an enlightened, freed, and pure womanhood as the most essential as well as the most redeeming desideratum of our times, nay, of all times. A great many conceited fools, however, throw difficulties in the face of giving women equal advantages of education and political power with men; but it is the outcome of ignorance and error. The first woman that yielded to the selfish caprice and tyranny of man in unjustly claiming superiority made a move backwards in human life, and even to this day millions of women are suffering from the stupid blunder. For my own part, I would allow them any place or position they intelligently aspire after. There is no mistake we sadly require reform on the side of women, and I do not think I am unjustly

severe in saying the majority of young ladies are fearfully destitute of mental culture. They are a sort of educated or slightly posted up in two or three languages, and of course taught to thump on the pianoforte, and can giggle and chatter, but that is about the most. However, I do not blame the young ladies; they are merely catching up the spirit of the times. It is the parents and teachers who are to blame. I often think parents are not half aware of the importance of sound home training. Children are sent to school, and money paid to post them up in a fashionable education, yet what does it all amount to? Therefore I am heartily glad that women are seeking to be more profound and sensible, and to be fitted for being, in the highest sense, the companion of man, as well as to enter into higher enjoyments. For too long the tone of modern society has tended to make women pictures or toys, instead of queens and princesses, to sit on the throne of human affection, subduing all base and inordinate desire, and giving to society beauty and meaning.'

'You know the times in which you live better than I thought, Major,' Hamilton said. 'When you love a second time—for it strikes me you have loved before, and found, like the dog that chased its shadow, that all the time you had been but paying homage to some ideal reflection—you will enter into the real paradise of bliss. How pathetically sad the heart is when it is sad through love! I conclude your continued celibacy is the hard necessity of unfavourable circumstances, the enforced punishment or privations of pride of rank and poverty of purse; and, of course, in these times a man is nothing in himself unless he can keep up a splendid style of what I would call pretension.'

'You are right, my friend,' the Major replied. 'It is not choice but stern fate which has hitherto compelled me to muddle on in single cursedness. Man, as man, can think, work, plan, create, undertake, and achieve; but without the mystic influence of woman, he can form no just conceptions of a pure state of civilization. In a word, according to my opinion woman is to man art, poetry, religion.'

'I am indeed pleased to hear you expressing such noble and inspiring sentiments on the mission of a true womanhood,' Mrs. Aslawn remarked. 'With all my so-called pride and prejudice, I go in for many forms of female emancipation. It is a mistaken and misleading idea that of supposing that mental study and intellectual pursuits will unfit a woman for the thrifty duties of housekeeping. On the contrary, wives and sisters are better qualified to be mothers and companions by a superior education and enlarged healthy views of the laws of physical and moral health. As a mother, her success as a governing power will lose its magic influence if she cannot enter into the intellectual sympathies of the various ambitions and aspirations of grown sons and daughters. It is, indeed, a sorry sight when the child, at any age, feels his or her parents are old in mind and unfit to enter into helping, strengthening fellowship. The truth is, a woman destitute of intellectual activity, with no real sympathy and interest in the great problems of life, is either a mere soulless drudge, or a dead drawback on the energies and income of husbands and brothers. What is any young man or woman in these lax times of restless love of

novelty and silly excitement, without the sure exchange, the chaste haven of repose, the refreshing well of instruction which is ever found in the home and heart of a great-souled, intelligent mother? An intellectual mother is a boon to society, and especially to her own children, for she only doeth them good, and that continually, and they rest in her love and wisdom, and find God through her beneficent sympathy and spiritual inspiration; and when she pleads with stirring eloquence and touching pathos for the poor and oppressed, she is, in very deed, an angel of mercy. Early marriages appear to me another fertile source of social misery, engendering over-population and pauperism. I abhor and detest all these monstrous checks to too rapid increase of population; and I see no reason why men and women, as reasonable, intelligent beings, cannot rule their sexual appetites in the same manner as they are compelled to restrain many other passions and tendencies. France is certainly before us in that respect, and no man should marry before he has established himself, so that he can maintain the true dignity of a husband and father. However, too early marriages are generally traceable to imperfect home training, and hence the more necessity for higher outlets for female industry and talent, and more need for higher education, to show women the beauty of the higher life of reason and aspiration.'

'Dear aunt, you are progressing immensely,' Hamilton replied. 'And I am at one with you in regard to the influence of mothers. Religion, I hold, is life in its highest and purest forthputtings; and the beauty, justice, and love of a noble mother is, to my mind, the grandest manifestation of vital Christianity; therefore I am another who wish woman all success in her endeavour to emancipate her sex from all ignorance and superstition. However, I specially admire your ideas on too early marriages, and think some movement should be got up to educate youths so as to realize the beauty of a noble, chaste self-denial, and to impress them with a horror of the injustice of wedding a woman to semi-starvation, merely giving to innocent children physical infirmity, and a childhood of stern privation sufficient to wither up all healthful energies. We who look on from a distance, can never—by the most generous sympathy or most sensitive imagination—understand or describe one-half of the stern sorrow and suffering coiled up in one unfortunate child.'

'Really I had no idea of enjoying such an intellectual feast, the variety of which adds charm to the worth,' the Major said. 'Such conversation makes a man look inward and commune with his secret desires and motives. Now, however, we are merely becoming echoes of one another, and once Miss Anderson comes in we will, I expect, have more drawing of swords. I ever find that all that touches the inner heart of humanity, and inspires truth, faith, and hope in the eternal and true, and breeds within the mind an enthusiasm for nobleness and goodness, and the uniting of all nations and classes of men in righteous brotherhood, levels down all narrow prejudices and mere party conceits. When we are sane and sober, and not carried away by some pet hobby or fancied success in argument, we all find the human soul immensely greater and more beneficent than all theological dogma or

legislative law. It appears to me the tree of life in the midst of all nations has ever been the living inspiration of souls who by purity of heart and holy sympathy have been in the bosom of the Father, and learned of Him. However, we have a stupid habit of crucifying all these redeemers. If we cannot nail them on a cross, or chop off their heads, we can slander, starve, and reproach. Nevertheless, even in death they gain the victory, for they possess a strange power, and cannot be held in the inanity of the grave. When they come as ghosts from the shadowy land, we lay moss on the empty tomb, and raise monuments to their memory. In all the ages God's holy ones are never allowed to rest in the grave or see corruption.'

'Noble, dignified, and true,' Monsieur thought as he gazed wonderingly into the grave, handsome face of the Major. 'Fortunate man! he is already opening his soul to inhale the fragrant breezes blowing in from the wind of love; already he is being melted and moulded into the mental and spiritual duplicate of fair Rosa. Love is a wonderful transformer. His sad, wearied heart is soon echoing her every sentiment, and greedily drinking in her healing sympathy. Already he is nearly one with her in her great ideas and noble ambitions, which render her so infinitely superior to the generality of women. She never aims at conformity or agreement with any creed, or mode of thinking, feeling, or acting, but seeks rather, by the most tender and rational means, to recreate the soul anew, to set it out in direct search after itself in its highest capabilities, and to re-establish it in direct communion with the eternal source of all wisdom. In her sight the Major is endeavouring to represent the saint and hero. If he do succeed in wooing her adoring affection, such a love will surround him with all the indefinable delights of paradise. Rosa's is a love that will rob remorse of its torturing agony, divest death of pain, turn the despair of hell into an anthem of thanksgiving, and convert the inanity of the grave into a blissful retreat, vocalized with the ever-chiming memories of a happy human experience, which shall ever live a corporate legacy of never-dying joy.'





CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FRIENDLESS.

WHEN Rosa and the young astronomer reached Drury Lane, there was nothing peculiarly striking in the locality as indicating extreme poverty or wretchedness. It was simply one of those narrow, confined rows of common dwelling-houses, leading between two more principal streets of the centre of W—, and every tenement portioned off into one or two rooms for the accommodation of people in very humble circumstances. There were few loiterers hanging in the entries or on door-steps, and passengers going to and fro might have been excused for concluding such an outward appearance of comparative decency enclosed nothing more wretched than a number of working people eking out a very bare livelihood.

Toward the middle of the narrow lane, Robert Anton led Rosa into an entry, saying, 'Now, this is the place; but we have to go up three stairs, and I think the poor woman's door is the first on the landing.'

By the aid of the matches they had furnished themselves with, the two strange companions made their way up a dirty stair; and the foul smells meeting them at every turn made Rosa sicken, and feel that tens of thousands of our people are indeed *the great unwashed*. On reaching the third landing, they found Polly Smith's door partly open to let out the smoke, which made the foul atmosphere like a bewildering plague. All was so silent and horrible-like, that Rosa feared the friendless one had fallen into the fire, and was now only charred ashes. With characteristic delicacy of feeling, she gave a gentle tap on the half-open door, then slowly entered.

'Merciful God!' she faintly muttered, as she strove to appear calm and unshocked, 'in forbearing mercy forgive the soulless cant and mockery of the churchism of our Christianity, and in some special way impart some ray of comfort to this, Thy rational creature, crushed like a moth beneath the grinding pressure of disease and starvation. Holy Spirit! who enrichesth the earth with never-failing beneficence, I am troubled in soul, and have no answer to give to this dear sister. I am covered with shame, and humiliation has shorn me of strength; for our Christian hands are gory with blood, and more cruel and exclusive than the bloody ritualism of Judaism, for we offer to Thée the heart-blood of the crucified, and fatten, in greedy

lust and selfishness, on the flesh of lambs and oxen. Better—surely better far—our planet had remained a huge liquid of gaseous vapour, than that reasonable beings, endowed with the mystery of conscious life, should be compelled to live or exist in such a state of awful misery.’

The sickening, horrifying sight that met Rosa’s eyes, aroused all the pathos and pity of her great soul, and wrung from her sensitive heart a righteous cry of severe condemnation. In a corner, beside a small spark of fire, and enveloped in smoke, sat a miserable living object, with her heavy, troubled head drooping on her chest. Her powerless limbs were fearfully swollen, and resting on a wooden stool. Judging from what remained, the sufferer must at one time have been very beautiful. However, disease, sorrow, and privation had done their threefold work, and little was left save a mass of oppressed corruption. Her right arm leant on a small table, and a piece of old carpet covered her benumbed limbs; and the only refreshment in the room was a jug of cold water, from which she ever and anon took a mouthful. She had, moreover, great difficulty in swallowing, and all about the wretched invalid, of scanty clothing and furniture, was very dirty; and the continual ejecting of blood, which almost constantly welled up from her ruptured heart, rendered the place and person painfully tragic. Her large black eyes had lost their shining lustre, and the misty glare of death was over her vision, and the groping, embarking spirit was wandering among the mysterious surroundings which stud the margin of time and the silent onflowing ocean of futurity. Her whole soul was turned inward, feeding on its own lonely bitterness, and her jet-black hair, thickly mixed with silver threads, lay in matted disorder round her pallid face. She appeared to have great difficulty in breathing; and striving to open her weak eyelids, she began fancying living objects were beside her, and warm human breath intermixing with smoke and foul air. Her vision first took in the young astronomer, and a pleased expression of kindly recognition struggled through her stolid indifference. Slowly, like one coming out of a long trance, she lifted her eyes and fixed them inquiringly on Rosa; and the moment their eyes met in conscious recognition, the latter took hold of her cold, clammy hand, saying, ‘Dear sister, I can see you are very ill and very lonely, but I am now come, and will care for you.’

‘Yes, I am very ill,’ the sufferer said, or rather faltered, ‘and intensely eager to be done with the wretched strife. I am dying fast, but not half so fast as I wish. If you can care for me, hasten my end, for I think disease can feed on its own corruption. Would my fever burned more freely, and festered less cancerously, so that the mainsprings might speedily disorganize and let me collapse into a heap of feelingless inanity. Is it not true that the doomed man desires the executioner to do his work as quickly as possible? When the last blessing has been said and the last meal eaten, the soul is dead, Providence a failure, hell drained dry, and the grave the last miserable refuge from the storm of human passion.’ The head of the sufferer again sank, and one burning tear rolled over her sunken cheeks, and fell on Rosa’s hand like a drop of molten lead.

'Poor, dear distressed sister, I am extremely pained to find you in such a state,' she said, perfectly at a loss what to say or how to act. 'I can see speaking costs you a great effort, and my poor words of sympathy seem a mockery. Still I would venture to comfort you, and make you, if possible, realize that Providence is no failure, but that the good God leaves the rich beneficence of His providence to human agencies. It is humanity which is the failure. Earth is our rich heritage, a common human nature our birthright; and if the weak will oppress the strong, and the fortunate leave the unfortunate to pine and die for want of sympathy and aid, it is unjust to lay the blame at the door of beneficent Providence. A miracle-working God would be more unjust than the good, patient Father who has filled our earth with goodness, and, in order that we may learn how to be great and good, leaves us to work out our salvation. The best answer, however, I can give to your just complaint, is to feed and nourish your failing energies. You are very weak. Is there anything you would specially like before I send Robert out for refreshment?'

'Speaking don't disturb me, fair stranger,' she whispered. 'Strange, I seem better listening to the tones of a human voice. In the deep, dark region of never-dying despair, I fancy what is called a lost soul never hears the notes of love and pity. Therefore I conclude I must still be somewhere in a half-hell sort of torment, where at least the echo of hope and tenderness is heard. I thought my heart and soul, my all of feeling, was dead—dead absolutely and eternally—not dead like inert matter, which sends up buds and stems in answer to genial sun-rays, but dead with the freeze of eternal death. Poor, weak fool! at the voice of love death cannot hold me. Ah! I am mad, the prey of deluding fiends, who call me sister. I have no sister, friend, or lover, yet my poor weakened brain cannot dash aside the silly delusion. Ah me! I am lost in the bewilderment of insanity; but speak on, fairy creation of a diseased mind, and while you speak, or rather while I fancy you are speaking, I may discover what world I am in, and what the kind and character of its inhabitants. Speak on, regardless of my babbling incoherency. The pressure of pain and misery has blotted out all trace of God, and by some strange power divested me of humanity, and I know not whence I am, who I am, or whither I am hastening. Speak on, and if possible dull the agony of this aching pain, for the constant pressure of distress has eaten a great hole in my heart, and the entwining vulture of mocking despair is, leech-like, preying on the skeleton outlines of the rending strings. Speak on, and I will try to die, wrapt in a delusive reverie; for I am a being outraged by man and forgotten by God.'

Perhaps the deeply afflicted only speak and pray with pathos and passion. Whatever the reason, it was evident the friendless sufferer was nearly done with all the concerns of time, and her 'dying voices' floated like branding curses on our vaunted civilization and our church-building and prayer-saying; and on the cold breezes that blew in at her half-open door, the old-fashioned voice, '*Thus saith the Lord,*' re-echoed her plaintive wail. 'Your church-going, your creeds and organs, are an offence to me. Your tracts and your prayers I cannot endure. But

I love mercy and truth ; and honour that man whose hands are clean of blood, and whose heart is established in righteousness.'

'I would willingly talk to you,' Rosa said ; 'but I must first feed and support your sinking body. By and by I trust, in the days that are to come, when I have cheated death of its prey, we will enjoy a deal of profitable and sweet conversation. I know by your accent that you can speak French. Therefore, *allons !* courage ! now is your dark midnight hour, but the first streak of silver morning is already on the hill-tops, and soon the singing of birds will have come.'

'Pray, do not trouble doing anything,' she said. 'Now it is too late. At this stage of the drama my wants are few and easily satisfied. All that is now necessary is this drop of cold water to lave my parched tongue. Now the body has become as proud as the soul, and is feeding on its own flesh and blood. Who would beg for refreshment, or crave for a morsel of bread, when the warm blood of a broken, starved heart is filling the closing throat, and sickening the rearing, revolting spirit ?'

'These are bitter sayings, wrung from a noble soul too long familiar with darker sorrow than that of Job,' Rosa said, almost choking with repressed sobs.

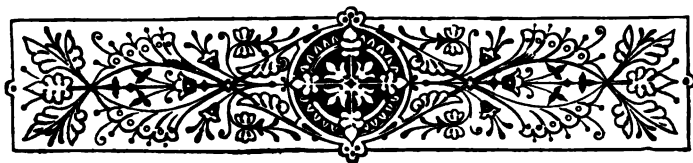
'Ah ! dear lady, I am terrifying you,' the sufferer said. 'To one who has never seen the shady side of life, I must appear a hateful enigma. Human experience is many-sided. Some drink as much sorrow and endure as much suffering in a few weeks as might drown a whole world, and yet, longing for death, live on, a bubbling mass of quivering pain ; others revel continually in luxury, and waste long years in silly vanity and clownish selfishness ; and between these extremes, many shades and forms of good and evil come in to fill in the picture. It has been mine to play a part in the two extremes, and I can easily grasp the minor notes of the requiem. You seem lost in wonder, and must think me a strange sort of monster, now reproaching the Author of life, and wishing to hurl the unsought gift back to its Giver in mocking scorn, then pouring out withering condemnation on Christian cant and hypocrisy. The Founder of Christianity, however, I have always revered. When all seemed far away, He ever appeared a fellow-sufferer. Poor, lonely, noble-souled Jesus had hard lines. Dear, murdered Founder of sane, sober sense, of stern justice and tender charity ! He too bled out His sinking heart, and, overwhelmed amid the darkness and fury of religious bigotry and barbarism, lost sight of the unity and perfectness of God's fatherhood, and felt as if He was forsaken.'

'The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and the soul its own sorrow,' Rosa replied. 'I am not horrified, only silenced and sad because my words appear as water. Whatever your experiences, I feel you are a noble woman, pouring out your just complaint. I am not one who believes there is one law for the rich and another for the poor, and can understand it is a cruel, unnatural position that of one of God's creatures having to beg for that which should come as its birthright. There is ever plenty and to spare on the face of the earth ; but social barbarism and codes of political government foster myriad forms of injustice, and what we call Christian philanthropy is at best a capricious, impotent thing. We punish a hungry boy or girl for stealing food to

quench the tearing craving of starvation, and take no account of the base, scheming villain who blackens the soul of an innocent, confiding girl, and leaves her a lost waif, cast adrift to find a miserable continuation of a hateful life, fed by the scathing mass of modern sensualism.'

'Ah! dear lady, I see you understand life; that you have been often behind the scenes, gazing on the skeleton outlines of living and dying men and women,' the sufferer replied, in tones so changed and musical that they sounded like the echo of a trembling harp. 'Now I know you are a true sympathizer, and my heart is satisfied. Strange, mystic power of affinity of feeling. Now my painful heart-aching is nearly gone, and I am tenderly longing for the oblivion of the grave. Now I am wearied to be hidden away in some forgotten spot while yet some lingerings of love and romance remain. Before I heard your voice I was a silent volcano, hating life and cursing God, and like a rearing war-horse, panting for death to exhale me into wind, to convert me into hailstones, or burn me into electricity, so that I might dart to and fro on the surface of the earth, furious with restrained vials of revenging wrath.'





CHAPTER XXIV.

POLLY SMITH'S NEIGHBOUR.

I THOUGHT I was right in hearing voices,' a gaunt, decrepit woman, with strong Irish accent, said, as she almost noiselessly appeared before Rosa, like a black mass of moving rags. 'Thanks to the holy mother of Jesus that you're there, young lady, to spake a word for the dying soul of Polly. Och hon, och hon! but she'll surely pass through purgatory without a fee, for the poor creature has no' a groat to pay a priest to say mass for the repose of her soul. Poor Polly is far on her journey over the troubled water, and has need for rest. For many a weary night she has been waiting for the coming of her Lord, and wondering why the chariot tarried. God bless yer bonny face, my dear lady; for shure the mother of Jesus herself could not do a better turn than visit this friendless creature.'

At any other time Rosa would have been simply amused at such remarks, but under the circumstances every word had a deep meaning; and she asked the strange visitor if she was related to the lonely sufferer, or knew anything about her friends.

'Shure, mem, and I can tell ye but a little,' the other replied. 'I'm Polly Smith's neighbour, and I only knows no one cares for Polly. I give her a visit two or three times a day, but I can do little, save look in to see if she still keeps living. The pains has put me all out of shape, and bound me hand and foot, and that wi' old age and poverty, I'm not fit for much. All that I know is, that Polly Smith came here to live over three years ago, from where I cannot tell. Then she went out sewing, and had lots of fine dresses, but always appeared to be carrying a broken heart in her bosom. I concluded she had seen better days, and that some heavy sorrow had befallen her. Poor Polly soon withered in this close place, and before a year she was a poor, delicate creature, unable to go and work. Then she was very ill, and I could hear her moaning in bed; and I took courage and went in to her, and since then we have been loving neighbours. She sold all that would sell to try and tide over the storm; but it's dying she is now, and that among dirt and rags. When the trouble takes her head, she tells me to sell the rags for a mite to bury her bones.'

'Dear me, this is dreadful,' Rosa said. 'Has no doctor been to see Polly? or has she had any regular poor-law relief?'

'Bless your innocent heart, doctors don't care coming to a patient when it's just the like of me calls them,' the aged visitor replied. 'Poor Polly is not up to the parish system of the poor-law; and when she sought relief they sent her away to get a big paper filled in, and all that sort of thing, telling she was a proper person to get assistance, and all where she had been all her life. I suppose Polly did not wish to tell any one where she had been, and she was dying on her feet, and unable to go after the ministers and get papers. But, och hon! had the men of the poor-law office but looked at her starving, hungry face, and seen her tottering step, they would not have needed a paper to tell them she was a proper person to get assistance. Thus Polly came home to her miserable house to die unseen; but she thinks death is about as slow as the poor-law to relieve her suffering. The Bible-woman comes sometimes, but she is angry because Polly will not allow her to have her carried to the workhouse hospital. Polly and I will live on a spoonful of water rather than go into these horrid places. I am not so bad as Polly, for the priest looks after me, and often sends me a bit of his own nice dinner; but Polly's a Protestant, and only gets a tract and a prayer. Had good Father Mathew been at home she would not have been so starving, but it's three weeks he has been away, and I have no nice dinner to share with her.' The frail old creature might have gone on for long had Robert not returned with a jug of savoury soup, and some cake and brandy.

'I have thought you long, Robert dear,' Rosa said; 'but I suppose these hotels often keep little men like you hanging on until the big giants are served. Put the change in your pocket, and see how you like carrying a bit of money. I daresay the rattle of a spare coin will be a rare treat to you.'

The faint sufferer looked annoyed at the gossiping old crone, but the smell of the savoury soup tempted her starving heart, and she gazed on the viands with wide-open, hungry eyes. Had she been allowed, she would have devoured the whole, and at first appeared disappointed at not being allowed her fill.

'You are right, dear friend,' she feebly stammered; 'too much would do more harm than good. I am ashamed at my greed, but the smell of food made me like a hungry lion. Now that you have fed me and spoken words of comfort, I should return thanks; but my life is not worth preserving, and at this extreme stage it might be greater charity to hasten the end.'

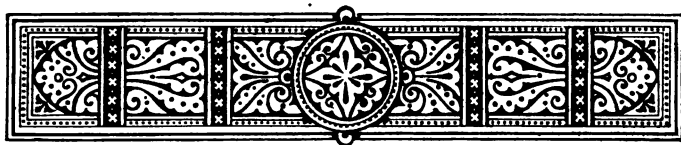
Tears were streaming from Rosa's eyes, but she dashed them away, and busied herself making the surroundings more tidy. The old woman still lingered; and before leaving, Rosa put something into her hand to get fire and other essentials.

'Do all you can for Polly until I return, which will not be long,' she said, 'and I will reward you.' 'Have faith and hope,' she whispered in Polly's ear. 'Although unseen, God is not far away, nor yet indifferent to the cry of the needy. Try and take courage until I come again. You know the mind can kill or cure. Endeavour to rise superior to your present sad suffering and fearful privation, and I will expect to see you somewhat improved. Perhaps kinder thoughts of

God and humanity will soothe you to rest, and early to-morrow I will return, to be your abiding friend. Now, dear sister, tenderly *au revoir*.'

'Come again, and perhaps to-morrow, did she say?' Polly Smith muttered, as she lifted her weary head to listen to the retreating footsteps of Rosa and Robert. 'Noble, generous creature, you would like to return, you would fain drain my cynical, scornful soul of its infinite torture; but my ghastly skeleton will haunt you with benumbing horror, and neither to-morrow nor any future to-morrow will your ethereal presence brood again on my fetid corruption. Dear, blue-eyed child of the sky! the reaction of this shock will be greater than you think, and you will naturally shrink from again coming in close contact with such revolting misery. Come again! Ah! how I long to die gazing intensely on her earnest, tender face! Black, blasted earth has yet one good, noble woman. Dear sister did she call me? O mystery of suns and stars, of life and death! now, in this hell, I cannot call thee love, but, sister mine, come back. O trembling star of human love and pity, come back! Come again! how I dwell on these two words! I must be growing as soft as insane, for dear sister and come again are becoming like sweet-ringing music-bells, and in the shadow of this smoky atmosphere I can see an angel bearing me away to heaven, and prancing horses conveying my mortal remains to God's acre, and dignified men uncovering their heads beside my grave, and Polly Smith, the starving, scorned pauper, a glorified saint, basking in all the joys of immortal life. Strange, I see the wretched father of my darling Daisy bent over my grave like a lightning-struck tree. Come again! yes, some other day it may be, when the round of Time's wheels has crushed me out, and with a fell sweep for ever hushed my wailing complaint. When gentle summer zephyrs are reviving the face of nature, and the glory of rejoicing earth banishes the very idea of evil and sorrow, these two strange companions, so like in sympathy and love, and so unlike in dress and features, may return and find my place filled by some other victim of man's passion and pride. Come now, long-wished-for death, while my heart is soft and tender!—come while I can think of you as a bringer-in of a better life!—come while I am calm, reasonable, and victorious, and, like a kind mother laying a weary child to rest, clasp me in your reposeful embrace! At eventide I have seen light; and although worms feed on my mortal remains, yet my intact individuality of thought and feeling shall see God, and for ever rejoice in His gift of perennial life.'





CHAPTER XXV.

IT IS BETTER TO BE HONEST THAN LIVE A LIE.

LADY MORAY slept soundly for fully two hours, and might have slumbered on in a half-dreamy state for long, had her maid not entered and reminded her ladyship it was time to dress for dinner. Only a few minutes more passed, when the butler advanced with a letter on a tiny silver salver. It was from Lord Moray, simply a cool, brief apology for his unexpected absence, telling her ladyship to take dinner at the usual time, and go to the ball if she desired, as he might not return for a day or two. Lady Augusta had only been a few years married, and was only in her twenty-fourth year; nevertheless she was well versed in the ways of the world, and knew how to assume a state of feeling suited to every circumstance. If position and rank had not given her peace and happiness, it had to a degree made her a woman of the world.

Delicately made, with flaxen, golden hair, and soft, dreamy eyes, she was a perfect picture. Gay dissipation, however, had already left traces of anxiety and languid weariness, and dark rings were appearing round her wistful orbs. Kissing the letter, she remarked it was from her dear husband, who had been suddenly called away, and that she felt disappointed at having to dine alone. If her maid did not believe in the sincerity of her ladyship's regrets at her lord's absence, she was equally well schooled in crafty dissimulation, and with her usual fluent flattery she got my lady ready for dinner. In evening dress Lady Augusta looked superb, and her taste in dress was considered *recherché*. On this particular night she seemed to lavish all her artistic adornments in careless profusion, and when she glided along the wide corridor to the great dining-room, the servants held their breath with reverent admiration. She was an indulgent mistress, and all her household were proud to be in the service of such a beautiful, generous lady. The effects of her recent excitement lent unusual animation to her face, and touching sadness shone in her pensive eyes. Her hair hung carelessly over her tapering shoulders, and in her snowy bosom a half-blown red rose seemed growing out of her rent heart, and a crown of pearls glittered on her forehead; and here and there, in the train and puffings of her pale cream-coloured silk dress, a bright crimson rosebud, with moss and green leaves, nestled in trimmings of rich point lace. In the intoxication of dressing,—for Lady Moray was vain and fond of conquest,—she

had forgotten all about Sir Charles' letter, and her unscrupulous maid picked it up, read the contents, and, delighted with the lucky discovery, safely secured the precious missive. Some day it might bring its weight of gold twice told.

Dinner had just been served, when Captain Geddes' card was presented to her ladyship, who at once ordered that he be conducted to her presence. 'It is an old familiar friend,' she remarked, 'and see that we are not disturbed.' The dinner was got through in a remarkably short time, and the Captain, having no desire to sup wine and walnuts alone, accompanied her ladyship to the drawing-room.

'I thought the formality of dining was never to come to an end,' the Captain said, clasping the lovely lady in his arms, and kissing her again and again with passionate fondness. 'I know I have taken you rather by surprise to-night, but the moment I discovered that cool scamp Moray had set off after his own bewitching fancies, I determined that my opportunity had come. The truth is, darling, I find I cannot live without you, and to-night I either win or lose.'

Poor, sorely-tempted lady, with no guide or adviser save an empty, aching heart and a loveless marriage; with a husband as careless and indifferent as though she was a stout old lady of sixty, with no emotions save for a good dinner and flowing port,—how, under such circumstances, was she to choose the right and severe, and despise the wrong and easy?

'James,' she said, 'you will be surprised, but I am beginning to realize the awful sacredness of life. To-day I have passed through a fearful ordeal. I was like one mad, and fully awake to the dignity and realness of a life of goodness. James, what is sin, darling? What have I done in caring for you? Have I sinned against God, and sunk both our souls to hell? Oh, be my friend, and advise me honestly!'

'Dearest, you have not sinned at all,' the Captain replied, lost in inquiring wonder. 'The worst that can be said is that we have outraged, or rather are going to outrage, conventional laws and rules; and I grant that of itself is no light thing. To lose caste, and all the nameless pleasures of outward respectability, requires some consideration; but after all it is better to be honest than live a lie. We hear a deal of sublime devotion to duty, which is often but another word for dead, slavish pandering to public opinion. The heart's desires, and the motives actuating our desires and actions, are, I think, what a just God will regard as sinful or righteous; and many of our laws and customs are but mere barbarism. It is more unholy to live on in a state of loveless wedlock, simply to please society, than to cast aside the yoke, and live in the union of love. Another thing, in our times one must do something outrageous in order to get a divorce; therefore, we must run away, and outrage law, before we can invoke an action which will restore to you liberty to become my wedded wife. A man cannot help his love, and from the moment I beheld you, I was your slave. Even if you had had a thousand husbands, I feel you are the one woman I could ever love. Now let us to action; time is precious.'

'Stay, darling, do not be so daring,' she said. 'Somehow I don't

feel you are right. Yet what can I do? It is dreadful to look forward to a long life of this disgusting misery. For our individual selves it might be better to run away; but what of our relations? And St. Paul says we are not to use our liberty for a stumbling-block to others.'

'Augusta, dearest, if we begin attempting to define where sin begins and ends, we will simply land ourselves into unprofitable philosophic profundities,' Geddes remarked. 'However, I admire your idea of respecting the feelings of others and the order of society before selfish inclination. Your relatives, however, are not of the sort to grieve over anything with a very godly sorrow. Pride and scorn are all they will fling at you; and the moment we are married, I will soon secure the favour of my mother and sister. We love each other madly, and our love has drifted us too far, and now the greatest good we can do ourselves and society is to be honest, darling. I am an honest, downright man; not that I claim to be a saint or correct moralist, but I am earnest in my love, and not a black-hearted, mean sneak like Richland, and some others of your distinguished admirers, who are not good enough to be shot, but who should be cast into a den to be eaten of hungry dogs.'

Lady Moray did not reply, but seemed lost in conflicting feelings; and the spell of her sad loveliness made the Captain's heart thrill and throb with yet more passionate adoration, as he again clasped her to his bosom, and almost hurt her in his fury of love's intoxication. With a sort of shivering horror, not at her lover, but her position, the unfortunate lady disengaged herself, and tears and convulsive sobs told of the intensity of her inner conflict of principle and passion.

'Darling, beloved! you terrify me,' he said, bending over her with tenderest sympathy. 'If you really loathe and hate me, I will in a few minutes quit you for ever of my presence. If you do not love me with a pure, full, undivided love, let no passionate seduction tempt you from one yoke of severe duty to another more reckless experiment. Unless our love be mutual, give me one last sad kiss, and I will seek in foreign lands and active service a balm for my blasted hopes.'

'Would I could say I did not love you, James dearest, and duty would be easy. It is because the strength of the temptation lies in my own heart that I am so unhappy,' she said; and her look and trembling, pathetic accents made the Captain feel he would fight earth and forego heaven to enjoy her continual presence. Like Dante and Beatrice, their love would convert hell into heaven, while its absence would make heaven a very hell. Her love was dearer far to him than life,—it was his life; and as she went on revealing its infinite depths, wild delight pulsated his entire being.

'I love you, and I suppose it is the grief ever born of real love which is murdering me. All real love purifies and elevates, so I have read; and now I feel holier and better than when I vowed at the altar to obey a man I never loved. It is my love that is agonizing me, yet its very pain is refining my dross and enlarging my nature. It is because I love you so much that I wish you to go away, and not link your fate with mine. Could you understand that in refusing to agree with you I am loving you all the more, you might understand me better, and

strengthen me in stern duty. For a time, at least, you will lose caste, and all the sweet companionship of your associates, and it is the idea of your loss which adds greatly to my pain.'

'What are associates, and the tinsel sham of mere caste standing, compared to the love of my life, but mere straws which I throw out of my way?' the Captain replied, again fondly folding her like a precious treasure to his bosom. 'Now that I know you really love me, I laugh at all dangers and defy all difficulties, whatever society may say, and certainly in most things I would, if possible, adorn its maxims; but its divorce law is at present unjust and capricious, and if we must outrage its conventionalism before we can gain the right to be decent and honourable, we know our love is pure and beautiful, and our marriage registered in heaven; and our elopement will be the first move toward order and honesty. Moray never loved you; and seeing we know where his affection is planted, we know he will sue for a divorce. Therefore in a very short time we will have an opportunity to get lawfully married. We will remain in England until your fetters are broken off, and then, in this very city, and in your favourite chapel, I will lead you to the altar. Afterward we will, if you wish, retire to some sunny foreign land, and in a blissful retreat my love will be to you father, mother, brother, sister, and adoring husband and lover.'

'James, you are very brave and very confident, as well as intensely ardent in love,' she said. 'And during all our intercourse I have found you infinitely superior to the generality of men; and I am loving you with a fond adoration, which is God's peculiar right. Man, however, requires more than love to complete his life. He delights in activity, enterprise, and the society of learned, intelligent men; and I fear, were I to listen to your earnest pleading, you might grow wearied of me, and, like a worn garment, cast me away. When I seem about to make the bold decision, a creeping dread steals over me, that when I am despised by my family, and when society is armed against me, you will turn coward and sneak away, leaving me with a deeper and denser misery than my present yoke of gilded bondage.'

'Augusta, you cruelly wrong me by the foul suspicions,' the Captain exclaimed, and his handsome countenance grew haggard and worn, as if the very suspicion of such base iniquity had the power to inflict immortal remorse. 'Men can play the foul fiend; but if I could become such a mean, sneaking coward, such a vile seducer and crawling worm, such an abject slave to an unprincipled, lustful passion, may I become in outward form a very serpent,—a duplicate of my inner soul,—and eat dust all my days, crawling on my belly! If for one half-hour I could nurse such a fiendish scheme, may He who holds the secrets of life and death cut me off from all hope of heaven, and curse me with immortal misery without the power of repentance!'

'Forbear, James!' she cried in pathetic tones. 'If you love me, and can form anything like an estimate of the meaning and worth of life and eternity, or form an opinion of the awfulness of real suffering, never again speak of casting away your hope of immortal blessedness. What fearful sayings you have been uttering! Methinks had you ever experienced the fearful hours of mental darkness which have rolled over

my soul; as it heaved up and down in an ocean of desperate anguish, you would, under all circumstances, cling to the one ray of light, love, beauty, and meaning in the complex mystery with superstitious tenacity. Purposeless existence and life loveless are evils sad and soul-wearying; but the ray of a completed life in a higher state of being comes in through the creaks in our rent soul, and in our present misery we are cheered by hope, and bending in meek submission, our losses and crosses purge away our dross of carnal selfishness, and we rest in the peace of heaven. Eternal misery, however, baffles reason, and maddens love and tenderness into a liquid hell of infinite despair, until in frantic defiance we throw back the gift of life with scornful disdain to its incomprehensible source. Darling, the conception of everlasting misery is far too deep and incomprehensible for human understanding. Human reason cannot grasp its awful meaning or intention, and the poor, sensitive soul revolts and reels before its endless, encircling torture. Even my most unjust enemy lost, cursed, damned, and made eternally miserable, would make me sicken in the very centre of heaven's blessedness; and the very favouring grace and pardon of God could not banish the charred mass from my view, or prevent me from weeping in paradise for the lost. To me God is love and mercy, and in all His creations I cannot find a hell of fire and brimstone; and it is fearful to think heaven and hell are spoken of in light, jesting terms. To a great extent, this recklessness of speech is attributable to ignorance; nevertheless, were the grandeur of immortal life fully realized, atheist and Christian alike would feel silenced with reverent awe. The former would boast less foolishly about the repose of kind mother earth, and the latter cease raving of everlasting fires and never-dying worms. The very mention of everlasting misery makes my brain swim and my heart sink; and I shudder to the very centre of my being to think I could collapse into dust, and see and hear no more the beauty and melody of nature.'

'What beautiful, earnest reflection, darling!' he replied, clasping her still fondly and closer to his bosom. 'I tremble lest I lose you. Whatever the opinion of society, to me you are an angel let down from heaven to cheer me on for a few years, and then fly away to wait for me at the gate of heaven. You have a life within a life, a soul within a soul, and are to me a grand, inspiring mystery, a beautiful poem. What are my poor thoughts and boasting assertions to such calm, earnest reflections! If you have had times of mental anguish, believe God only hides or withdraws Himself from such as you, that He may woo you still nearer to His love, and fill you immeasurably with His wisdom. Your faith and charity honour His entire attributes. Would I were more worthy of you! But you shall teach me day by day, and our future of unbroken happiness will make up for the present time of sorrow. In active deeds of charity, in the studies of art and science, and above all, in the joy of our love and the purity of our lives, we will compensate to society for the present contempt of its decorum; and when the battle of human life is ended, we will renew our union in a state of being where law is merged into love.'

Lady Moray offered no more argument, and the rest of the time was spent in a luxury of mutual endearment. Instead, however, of gracing

the ball, her ladyship put society at defiance, and went off with the gallant captain ; and cynical, sensual Sir Charles spent the evening, like the ghost of Hamlet's father, nursing his revenge and musing on his wrongs.

Of course, in the morning Moray raged, swore, and wept in turns, and in a few hours sank into a decent state of seeming indifference. Her ladyship's conduct went through the eight-day gossip of wonder, blame, reproach, and pity ; and thus round went the fashionable world, while in the background, swaddled in by the din and dirt of poverty, disease, crime, and pauperism, scenes of more real as well as more tragic life kept grinding on.





CHAPTER XXVI.

ROSA BEGGING.

WHEN Rosa left the miserable abode of Polly Smith, she went more than half-way home with the young astronomer, and for a time wandered along the wet streets, unconscious alike of wind and rain, scarcely knowing whither she was tending. By virtue of intense sympathy with the poor and unfortunate, she felt as wretched, lonely, houseless, and wearied as the friendless waifs, hunted from arch to doorway, and from pillar to post. Swallowed up in a great divine mission, she was completely one with all misery and misfortune; and her great heart sank, her limbs shook, and faintness made her reel and stagger. It never occurred to her that she was both cold and hungry, and that her over-taxed nervous temperament was rending her physical frame, and tearing it in pieces with fever force. Only of one thing was she acutely conscious, viz. of her duty to humanity, and firm obedience to conscience; and lost in a reverie of conflicting reflections, she moved along, and in inaudible whispers said:

‘Holy God! where art Thou? Surely all who earnestly seek Thee shall find Thee a true, living word, showing them the way of life. Now, even to-night, come near and bless all the weary and heavy-laden. It is an easy matter throwing into the poor-box, or even on Sunday discoursing fluently on social misery and mankind’s fall. To be an unfortunate one, to be friendless and heart-sick, rapping at the gilded mansion-house of public charity,—to be aged, indigent, and dependent on a chance mouthful or the workhouse, is to know privation, is to realize misery, is to be miserable. In a word, such an experience is hell, utter, blank, complete; and we poor waifs are justified in hating life, and shunning the jewelled creatures known as the cream of society as the most savage brutes in creation. Ah! it is dreadful to stand alone in this beautiful world, with the mystic glory of starry sublimity mocking our aching wretchedness, without a friend, a kindred sympathizer, or a mite of money to purchase a morsel to satisfy the craving of famished nature. God help the poor! God be mercifully near to those bearing the brand of shame, who are sneeringly passed by and despised by the haughty and outwardly respectable. Never until to-night did I know how fearful a thing it is to be an out-cast, or how agonizingly bitter the portion of abject poverty. No

wonder blessed, great-souled Jesus was often alone, weeping and suffering! No wonder He groaned in spirit, when the love and zeal of His chosen few grew so cold and indifferent that they fell asleep, leaving Him alone, struggling in agony with His great mission and the enclosing opposition of murderous fanatics! Like the Divine Founder of Christianity, I am alone and in great agony, considering the afflictions of the needy. Nevertheless, the masses of mankind, even after professing Christianity for eighteen hundred years, will simply characterize my conduct as mad folly, an excess of enthusiasm, or zeal not according to sound doctrine. What to me are the opinions of men, or the ease and luxury of indolence, when conscience is approving, and the weltering masses of down-trodden poor call me friend and saviour? What to me is the luxury of my portion while so many are lying uncared for in filth and disease, and many more drawn together like bundles of moving rags beside fireless hearths, while decent poverty, with cleanly habits and noble aspirations, is compelled to live in damp, rotten hovels, not fit for the healthy protection of the lower animals? Home I will go by and by. But how can I rest or sing "Sweet Home," while a crowd of pallid sufferers follow like haunting ghosts seeking redress from social evils, none the less appalling and shameful because familiar and manifold. Merciful God! support me, or I will sink and die. My heart is faint, and I am weary, and lost in an ocean of suffering too real and complex for my weak effort. This mere pushing the world's redemption a mile nearer completion is weary, unsatisfying work to those who burn with eager desire to see paradise regained, not in one town or nation, but over the wide world.'

While thus inwardly soliloquizing, Rosa reached a corner leading right into the main entrance of the poor-law office. By this time, however, she was so completely identified with the shivering creatures who hung around the door, waiting their turn for a mite or an insult, that she neither saw nor felt anything save an overwhelming sense of lonely destitution. Then she realized that the highest mission of genius is human redemption, and its most vital power pathos and pity: then she realized that pen had never written the too-stirring romance of real life; that no master-soul had faithfully recorded the tragic facts coiled up in our bleak garrets, back lanes, and narrow streets; and that it remained with the future to sweep away our present influx of unreal, immoral, frothy fiction, and to write the arousing romance of the weltering poor: then she felt that social science will but grope and, it may be, lose all vital enthusiasm without the aid and inspiration of social literature, great in aim and devout in spirit.

'Happy student of art and science,' she thought, while waiting an opportunity to present her claim; 'happy student of religion, thy experiences are akin to the ever-widening sublimity of planetary space. In harmony with reason and the dictates of unsoiled conscience, your aspiring souls follow after the footprints of the Author of your being; and as you think out His great divine thoughts after Him, all is indeed to you very good, and each new day finds you more and more wrapt in the full enjoyment of the gift of life. Happy child of art and education, over thee the Almighty has cast a canopy of light and love.

Within is the mystic blaze of a genial, noble enthusiasm ; and around thee myriad forms of mysterious beauty are ever unfolding vast varieties of designs and manifold complexions of grace, beauty, and utility ; and as you strive to reproduce the inner soul of the beautiful and sublime, and to awaken in mankind generally a love for all that is lovely and virtuous, your own soul, ever in advance of the seen and realized, soars into the divine silences speech has not ventured to scale, and your rapt faculties are ravished with the pathetic songs of creation's benediction ; and before your spiritual vision, the ladder of holy reciprocity hangs between earth and heaven, and you hear the voice of your Father in the budding garden of your soul, and grow holier and more blessed as you increase in wisdom of soul and artistic excellence of mind, and to you all is harmony and complete unity. But, alas ! what shall I say regarding those shivering, swarming creatures, whose minds, in most cases, are as benighted as their position is poor and painful ? Who are those who come creeping and crawling, like hungry dogs for a bone, to the door of national almsgiving ? Pestilential vermin, I have heard them called—pests, and disturbers of the peace. But are they not our brethren, children of the same Father ? Are they not blood of our blood, flesh of our flesh, and pulsating with the same susceptibilities, the same hopes and fears, the same feelings of pain, hunger, and weariness ? If these creatures I am witnessing, and those in the closes I have visited, be children of the same God, sisters and brothers, and aged fathers and mothers of us Christians, I have gone mad. Some mania has taken possession of me, and a poor, crushed being, destitute of wit and wisdom, I am conjuring horrid phantoms from the misty shadows of a diseased brain. Forgive me, Great Britain, the unpremeditated insult ! In thy land of gospel light and Christian ordinances, there can be no starvation, no injustice, no unequal distribution of labour and reward ; no young children, deprived of sunny childhood, toiling in ignorance for daily bread before they have begun to realize a personal existence. You can have no unforgiven criminals wasting precious energies in jails, eating the common wealth and nursing revenge ; no horrid gibbets dangling between earth and heaven, as if no God of love had been revealed ; no neglected genius blooming unseen, no fair women crushed by injustice and oppression, no princes who sit late for gluttony and rise for selfish enjoyment. None of these evils can be within our borders, for we are a zealous people, worthy only of good works. We are enlisted under the generalship of Christ. We go to church on Sunday, sing hymns, and say our prayers. Nay, our piety is so replete in all moral and social excellence, and so artistic in its tastes and sense of the grand and sublime, that we pull down all plain or inartistic edifices, and vie with our thousands in building a house to do honour to Him whose temple is the ethereal dome of infinite space. When we are so liberal and zealous in building houses for God, we can have no human beings sheltering from wind and rain in narrow hovels, in mere holes ; no ill-fed, ill-clad men, women, or children hiding from God's chosen elect. When we are so true in doctrine, so regular in observance of all holy ordinances, so liberal in honouring God with stone and mortar, we must be a nation unique in

mental, moral, and spiritual excellence, and socially perfect. Within our golden streets no wandering, unloved waif can be found, no weary heart void of sympathy, no mind unpolished, no soul impure or unclean; but blessed, pure, and holy, like a sparkling miniature of the city above, we stand out a clear light in the centre of surrounding barbarism.'

The sense of isolation told Rosa her chance had come. All the waiting beggars were served, and no new ones arriving, she entered, and rather timidly inquired if Mr. B——, the inspector, was in, and if he was disengaged. Eyeing her all over, the poor-law assistant concluded she must be some green hand at low life, come to raise sufficient for a night's lodgings or a debauch.

'Mr. B—— is not in,' he said sharply, 'and it is now past business hours. Even for beggars you are ten minutes past time, so whatever your request, you must go away until to-morrow. If we waited on all pests, our office would never be closed.'

'I am a beggar,' Rosa replied, 'and if I am only ten minutes late, remember my case is urgent, and do try and serve me.'

The clerk was rather astonished at her frank admission. Sad-looking and yearning she certainly was, yet her appearance was not exactly that of a beggar; and softening his tone, he said, 'Well, lose no more time, but state your case, and I will see what I can advance.'

In a few plain, pointed sentences Rosa told her story, or rather the story of the dying woman she had left, and finished by saying she was there to demand immediate and real assistance.

'From your statement one must conclude the case rather desperate,' the subordinate remarked. 'Such cases, however, are not uncommon. Hundreds die every year of solitary starvation rather than go to the workhouse. Of course, we never publish such cases. If the poor will be particular even in poverty, that is their business, not ours. If a woman prefers to die in dignified starvation rather than condescend to general pauperism, I believe it is as well to die outright and be done than live on on prison fare and winter-cattle experience. I will, however, take a jotting of the case, and lay it before Mr. B——, who, I doubt not, will attend to it to-morrow.'

'To-morrow will not do, sir,' she replied; 'it will be too late. However, you are simply an assistant. Do you expect Mr. B—— to-night? it so, I will wait.'

'Of course I do,' he said; 'but I know he will do nothing more than I have suggested. In order, however, to save time and all unnecessary disputation, there is half-a-crown. You visiting ladies come here believing every story, and fancying this office a public fund, to be used as you please. The truth is, the most of the low, drunken pack you plead for are either professional bad women or ticket-of-leave thieves.'

Before the clerk had finished his declamation, all fear and trembling had left Rosa, and she then appeared like an avenging goddess, standing on the threshold of poverty and oppression, breaking its chains in twain, and cutting deep into the cancerous womb of social barbarism and misnamed charity and philanthropy. With her single great soul she stood hammering out an escape for the myriad victims of many forms of social bigotry and injustice.

'Your experience, sir, has made you in many respects wise and acute; but, alas! all experience which fails to soften and elevate is lost,' she said. 'I am shocked to hear you speak as you do of fallen women and other branded creatures. What, I would ask, feeds the great national disgrace of prostitution? You forget that every professional bad woman is simply a witness of at least twenty professional bad men. And where is the difference? and at whose door lies the most sin? Even supposing the woman I am pleading for had been a street pest or ticket-of-leave thief; if the latter, she has paid to law the last farthing, and has a right to protection; and if the former, we simply drive many more to vice by our want of sympathy and regard for the fallen. However, my knowledge of your manner of conducting business will enable me to condemn you by your own statement. The truth is, if there be one class you deal liberally with, it is with street pests and idle, wandering vagrants who will not work, and reserve your most cutting insult and scantiest mite for decent poverty.'

The clerk had dropped his pen, and was gazing aghast with wonder and confusion. How to make things right he knew not. To his infinite relief, however, Mr. B—— made his appearance. Addressing his superior, the clerk read over his jottings, and concluded by saying he had offered the lady half-a-crown, but that she considered such simply an insult.

Mr. B——, the inspector, was a man over fifty, of florid complexion, and puffy, with a long white beard, small, greedy grey eyes, and low forehead, and characterized, even by his friends, as ever bearing about him a strong odour of whisky or brandy. The truth is, for once he was the right man in the right place—that is, a man perfectly able for any amount of snobbism and vulgar impudence.

'Indeed,' he drawled, 'so you refuse half-a-crown, young lady? I suppose, however, like 'all new at the interesting vocation of philanthropy, you expect to whitewash society in a month—that is, to bring them round to your way of thinking and acting? Also, as a matter of course, you believe every fine-got-up story of our pests and begging vermin, whose only joy is in deception, and whose proper element is wallowing in the mire. Merry to-night and nothing but jail to-morrow is the perfection of their ambition.'

'Your assistant has forgotten to say he suggested the workhouse hospital,' Rosa said, taking no notice of his remarks; 'and as every experience is letting me see clearer and deeper into this great complicated machinery of public fraud, existing merely for the fostering of chronic pauperism and professional dishonesty, I tell you positively that I am intensely in earnest (insanely in earnest, if you please), and will have my way in this case. Therefore I again refuse your insulting mite, and will not allow that dying woman, hovering on the margin of eternity, to be dragged from the seclusion of home (or, as your assistant called it, the dignified isolation of dying of starvation like a human being, rather than accept of winter-cattle shelter in a workhouse), to die like a kicked dog on the way thither. Before now I have too often known medical men pander so dreadfully to the inhumane terms of public charity as to allow, nay, give orders for friendless, dying men and women to be taken

from home with the dews of death on their brow; and when it was found they had died on the way, all the apology for this inhumane lacerating of death-pain was to drop them into a coffin, or on the dead-house table for further outrage. Things, however, cannot for ever remain the same. Witnessing heaven will raise up some prophet or prophetess to denounce and warn. If medical science and Christian philanthropy will co-operate with such barbarism, social science or humanityism must come forward, and in living Christianity shame our mere profession of dead, delusive doctrine.'

'Strange, strong sayings these, madam,' the inspector said, bustling about, and indicating by every movement that he was uncomfortable, and impatient for his visitor's departure. Anger, too, was fast overmastering him, and he dreaded lest further disputation should make him so forget himself as push her to the door. 'These are no mere random hits, but matured conclusions of some of our combustible democratic fanaticism. It is evident you are a shameless platform woman, one of those who have taken it into their brainless heads that they possess the power as well as the will to turn social and political science upside down. Seeing you have had such a cutting fling at medical science, I presume you are a candidate for the Royal College of Doctors.'

'To condescend, sir, to offer the merest acknowledgment of such unseemly unmanliness would be waste of time,' she said in low, pathetic tones. 'Therefore I simply say I am not set on turning society upside down, but doing all I can to turn it inside out, and the same with political science. I seek to rob no one of their good position, or their liberal reward for labour, but am striving to find out means, and to stir up men and women to aid me, whereby the enslaved, the unfortunate, and ignorant will be able to take an independent and honourable place amongst us. Again, therefore, I repeat, I will have it that this neglected woman realize, before leaving our world, that she is a sister of a christianized brotherhood, and a child of the Father of our Divine Founder. You no doubt fancy you are leading a faultlessly respectable life by thus deadening your sensibilities with strong drink, and dealing with the unfortunate and poor as a buyer and seller of dead stock. You might, however, be of some use in society, and give evidence of more manliness, if you refrained from adding to the aggregate of our national evil, and simply do the little good of speaking kindly. To-night, however, we part, and I will find a nurse, and all that is necessary for the dying woman, and shall expect you to call on me and settle the account.' So saying, Rosa handed him her name and address, and made for the door.

In a moment the inspector's hand was on her shoulder, and in trembling tones he exclaimed, 'Stay, do stay a moment, dear Miss Anderson! There has been a mistake. A thousand pardons! upon my honour as a gentleman, I did not know you. How stupid of me! but we are so fearfully imposed upon. The truth is, so many of these tract distributors, without either money or good connections, fancy our office should be entirely at their disposal. Therefore, dear lady, forgive my blundering stupidity. It was all done in defence of public tax-

payers. It is indeed rank stupidity of me not to know the honoured niece of our distinguished ex-mayorress. Do be seated for a moment. What a dreadful night it is! Really such nights make the case of the poor intensely painful. I shall at once see about a nurse, and everything the case requires. Do be seated. I have sent off my assistant for a cab; you could never walk on such a night.'

'Thank you very much, but I shall walk home,' she replied. 'Beggars seldom have a drive unless with the butt end of selfishness into the gutter; and I am so completely a beggar to-night that the idea of a drive is quite out of the question. As a woman pleading for the unfortunate of my sex, you have insulted me; and as the niece of Mrs. Aslawn, I refuse your generous kindness. You ask me why I did not make myself known at first. Was it necessary? Is there not an indication of a great social evil implied in your question? Surely you have forgotten you are a public servant in a public charity institute, supported, to a large extent, by the working classes; and while a workman or woman can rent a house equal for taxation, so long as one article of furniture remains, the tax-gatherer has no pity, and less delay. Such being the case, are we workmen and women to come sneaking and cringing under the protection and with the leave of some provincial demagogue or monied snob for the righteous use and lawful liberty of our own? If the case be an imposition, there is generally sufficient time to expose and punish the false reporter. The truth is, the generality of ratepayers are too easily satisfied in regard to poor-rate taxation, with its uses and abuses.'

When Rosa was gone, the poor inspector sank on a chair, and buried his face in his hands, and in hurried, spasmodic whispers said, 'Good God! what a fearful mistake I have made! Another five minutes, and I would have fallen at her feet. What times we live in! Truly, as she says, all things change; so, evidently, must poor-rate taxation and workhouse mismanagement. I have heard her called a sort of original freethinker, but free speaker might better indicate some of her peculiarities. If she reports one-half to the old lady, all is up, and I will have the select committee down on me like crows on a dead horse. Curse it! had I not been out for a fresh glass she might not have smelt the whisky. To say I am heartily sorry would be an easy matter; but my apology, like my kindness, as she called it, might be ironically despised. Only think of every town in Great Britain having six such women! It may come to that; and if it do, there will soon be an everlasting end to poor-rate extortion, as well as all social misery. With all my selfishness, I would almost like living to see our isle a sort of paradise, vibrating with music, beauty, and concord. Might not such, however, be tame equality? Ah! I see, in everything there would always be good, better, best; ever a sublime emulation for excellence in all art, science, commerce, and industry. What if, after all, our creed and confessional, elect-saving and general damnation, be mere dead dogmas, pure human theorizing, and universal victory over evil possible? The truth is, the most of our fine appearances are but splendid shams. Even in rags and dirt, an honest man is the noblest work of God. The mad love of jolly companions, and the madder love of strong drink, is insane

stupidity. Ah, how easily we speed down the incline the moment some gross passion has full possession! All drunkards, even moderate drinkers, are afflicted with a sort of insanity. Wherever there is inability to resist a known evil, there must be moral, if not mental insanity. Pooh, pooh it as we please, strong drink is the curse of our land, nay, it is fast overspreading every country on the face of the earth. When we wisely consider, it is indeed a monstrous invention that of converting so much wholesome grain into a maddening poison, to shorten short, brief life. Help me, O God, from this date to break the head of the hellish seducer, to resist the bewitching spell, to slay the subtle serpent as it comes sneaking with its sparkling skin and myriad forms of soft excuses. Speak of a devil, and go praying, as we do on Sunday, to be delivered from his power! It is but one of many of our orthodox humbugs. I have never found the old devil of tradition—the lord of everlasting fires—to interfere in the least with my good or evil inclinations; but this modern devil, this black invention of civilisation and refinement, this almighty devil of strong drink, has come between me and the tree of life, and I fear I am lost, damned for ever. Human life, with its myriad forms of religion and complexions of creeds, and weary heart-burnings, is a confusing, queer affair all through; and I bet my life and position is as strange, complex, and inconsistent as the orthodox plan of salvation. For instance, my wife often tells me I drink and gamble a pound a day, and yet I keep a good house, servants, and well-educated family, all free of debt, on £200 a year. The review is sufficient to deprive me of reason, or drive me to suicide. Ah! it is easy balancing figures, and marking in items of general outlay to fill in peculiar deficiencies.'

Cold, damp drops stood out on the bald forehead of the inspector, and his limbs trembled and smote one against the other. Recovering himself a little, he called his assistant, and gave him orders to see at once that everything be done for the woman Polly Smith in Drury Lane. The most of the business was finished up by the assistant before his superior put in an appearance, and after giving the said orders, the inspector, as usual, wandered in the way of his nightly rendezvous. He wished he could go home, but his burning thirst made him long for one drop more to help to drown the tormenting annoyance of his blundering stupidity; and before he was fully conscious of how easily the old foe was leading him captive, he heard voices calling, 'Here he comes, the best man alive!' Recalled to a sort of consciousness, Mr. B— discovered he was in a back room of a respectable hotel, and beside three bosom cronies, who sat, with a jug of steaming toddy, dividing a pack of well-worn cards. Catching up the strain of the welcoming voice, the other two chimed, '*For he's a right good fellow, good fellow, which no one can deny.*'

The very atmosphere was murdering to all the semi-repentance of the inspector. And in a moment the old demon entered, taking with him seven other spirits, more vile, into the aching void. It was no small matter standing so high in the estimation of his mutual friends, and the whole of his fine resolutions melted like snowballs before the sun. It never occurred to him that these men at heart considered

him a consummate fool, and were merely flattering his besetting sins of pride and vanity, that they might draw on his purse. He was a golden goose, and seeing they knew the contents of his purse came off a broad back, they had less scruples in fleecing their red-billed, puffy bird. Divinest music was never more sweet to a dying saint than these sounds of hollow laudation to Mr. B——, and proudly tossing a crown on the table, he entirely forgot all his remorse, and his emotional prayer for divine aid, and drank more freely and gambled more recklessly than heretofore.





CHAPTER XXVII.

DRESSING FOR DINNER.

GOODNESS! your clothes are wet through and through, my lady,' Rosa's maid remarked, while assisting her to dress for dinner. 'If your aunt saw this mess, we would never hear the end of it. It often appears to me you carry sacrifice too far. It is possible, even in good-doing, to go beyond the mark. How you escape fever and bad colds, beats me. I am sure six days of the seven you are, some part of the day, in a fever den, or dirty hovels full of disease, where you find bleared, blotched human beings huddled together in dens not fit to shelter horses or cattle. However, I suppose the angel of the Lord encompasses you round with disease-destroying influences. Well, that is all very well in a way, but I think I would act more prudently, and rely less on the power of invisible miracle. Of late I have noticed you are not looking nearly so well. I see you anxious and restless, as if you had some inner pain or cause for anxiety. Therefore, take my humble advice, and not sacrifice yourself for evils you cannot purge away or lessen. Do be more selfish, and look to your own pleasure, and let the world wag away. At best, it is but an ungrateful, tangled thing, and you have done your share of saviour-work long ago; and it appears to me, do as you like, sin, war, and iniquity will continue to the end of the world, which, by the way, is rather long in coming. I remember hearing my grandfather relating, with a degree of comic humour, how his spouse, my venerable grandma, who was exceedingly pious according to beliefs and traditions, got it into her head, by some wise calculations drawn from the Bible and other preachers of signs, that the full time had come, and that the end of all created things was near. So confirmed was she, and so eager to be found watching with oil in her vessel, that grandfather could not advise her, either by reason or threats, to go to bed for two whole weeks. Worn out, however, at last, and beginning to think all was not exactly infallible in her church's doctrine, she fell asleep, and slept so sweetly and soundly that from that date she never mentioned the final winding up of nature. Thus you will see it is possible getting over-anxious about the world's salvation, or the mind and will of God. Speaking of the end of the world, when do you think that will be? It may seem strange so to argue concerning such; yet I often think about

it, until I dream I see the heavens in a blaze, and feel the earth melting and rending beneath me, and the living flying in terror to and fro. It is a horrid experience, and I can assure you I am glad when I awake and find it all a dream. If every word of the Bible be the true infallible word of God, why did St. Paul make so many mistakes? He lived in the hope that Christ was coming again in his day, and he affirmed many things which are now found to be very narrow and intolerant.'

'I will not pretend to be able to answer all or half the difficulties which have arisen in the human soul, in its onward advance in enlightenment, to prevent it from accepting the Bible as the all of God's inspiration and mind toward humanity, or to prove how utterly impossible it is for the living soul to draw all its life and inspiration from a book, even granting the book to be a divinely inspired one,' Rosa replied. 'My advice to you, Jane, therefore is, follow conscience, and the mystic voice within stirring conscience, and do not trouble warring over any human opinion or authorized version of beliefs. If your religious soul continue seeking, it will find; if you hunger for the bread of life, God will not mock you by sending you away to famish on the stones of tradition and doctrinal absurdity, but His Spirit will lead you by green pastures, even to the beautiful gate of rapt communion with His fatherly love. It appears to me, St. Paul had no special revelation save the one grand central truth, that Romanism was a lie and delusion, and that Christianity was the religion of the human soul; and that much of his doctrinal sayings and spiritual expectations was the result of his previous modes of thinking, his early education, and the burning intensity of his zeal for goodness, and especially to the person of Jesus. His great missionary enterprises, and his meek sacrifices and heroic endurance of hardships and cruelties, will for ever stand unique; but his theological ideas of the plan of salvation will pass and perish. Great as St. Paul was, he was not sufficiently God-like to be able to labour on and believe the end of all things thousands of years distant, perhaps for ever and for ever distant.—I am indeed obliged to you for your kind advice concerning my health. However, unless we ignorantly or foolishly despise all prudent considerations, such as sitting down in wet clothes, or allowing chills to come and go without intensifying the action of the system, and raising the tone of our entire constitution again, no amount of real, good, honest work can injure. It is feverish anxiety, and mistaken notions of success, and too eager desire for fame, and heart-burning for appreciation and reward, worry and disappointment, which dry up the healthy or holy energies of life, bringing on disease of body and mind, and often premature death, or a species of madness more to be dreaded than death. A cheerful, healthy soul, resting on the bosom of the Almighty, recognising Him in all things, and caring for nothing so much as to do His will, has a fount of infinite resources and pleasures which are as indefinable as real. In a word, if the mind is animated by zeal for work's sake, and all glowing with a noble enthusiasm, the soul or spirit is superior to all outward circumstances. Nay, opposition and all favourable and unfavourable experiences are mere servants whereby the earnest worker achieves

mental, moral, and spiritual miracles. Another mistake appears to me, concerning revelation or inspiration, with Bible as well as other writers, to be that of confounding individual revelation given for an age or a particular nation or race as the all of God's mind to humanity for all time, forgetting that God is to this day specially inspiring His listening children.'

'You have indeed enlightened and comforted me, my dear lady,' Jane replied, 'and I assure you I feel heartily thankful. I have often wished to tell you how unhappy and confused I was becoming in regard to a consistent meaning of salvation and Bible sayings, and have vainly endeavoured to make them square with what has taken place since the Bible heroes lived. The minister says that book is the only rule of our faith; but for many a day I have heard God speaking directly to my inner soul, and telling me many nobler things than that written by St. Paul. However, in these days of dry materialism on the one hand, and bigoted orthodoxy on the other, we might as well say we had travelled to the moon with our physical feet, as venture to affirm we hear God speaking in the inner conscience, and can hold actual communion with His Spirit. One night, at the close of the prayer meeting, I told the Rev. Mr. C—— of my experience, and he bade me search God's word, believing nothing outside the written record. Like a dumb, driven sheep I turned away, powerless to tell him it was because I was believing more than was revealed therein that I felt unhappy and full of doubt. Now, however, when you have explained how our Father in heaven has something to say to the children of men at the present time as well as in the past, that He can and does inspire a humble servant, I can love and obey Him, and find heaven within my own soul. Now I feel very comfortable, and will try to live very nobly; feeling God to be our loving Father and best friend, we cannot sin. Excuse me, dear lady; how I have been talking and rambling, and wearying you! Pray, forgive me.'

'You do not require to be forgiven, Jane,' Rosa replied. 'Surely one woman can talk to another on these important subjects without giving or causing offence. I am indeed glad to know such themes are occupying your mind. At spare times we will often talk on sacred subjects, and thereby enjoy the luxury of mutual conversation and sympathy. In reality there are no distinctions save that of soul and mind. All social shams and caste separation are simply myths created to gratify pride, and administer to the lust of arrogance and prejudice.'

'I wish I could hold mutual conversation with you,' Jane said. 'But speaking in that fashion is entirely new to me. You are learned compared to me, and familiar with all big words. However, the heart has words of its own, and when it is full of any subject, it will speak out. Therefore, while I arrange your hair, so soft and flaxen, I am to take the liberty of emptying my mind of many ideas and feelings, which have got twisted into all sorts of forms, and are causing me to lose sleep endeavouring to embody them into something like useful form. One thing or one idea is, I have been thinking society all over awfully cold and selfish, and that we do not love and reverence one another half enough. Somehow I think we all think too meanly and small of

one another, and of life in general. Making money, and getting fine clothing and good food, seems the main business of life ; and if that be all life is for, I hardly care to continue the struggle. Some parents spoil their children, making virtues of their vices, and others see genius and nobleness in all children but their own. Most young men reverence and do homage to the sisters or friends of their companions, but see no virtues and graces in their own sisters ; and while taking all their gifts of love, snap and snarl at them, thereby degrading, or at least ill-using, the beings who have helped to make their social standing, and who are in many ways superior to those they honour. A great many servants, also, at heart hate their mistress, not because she is their mistress, nor yet on account of their work, even if it be heavy, but simply because she makes it evident, at least ten times every day, that she is my lady, and her servant only a poor white slave. A soft smile or kindly word, and a refined, polite manner, make sunshine in the soul, and compel the less refined to be purer, truer, and better. Our world, with all its beauty and sublimity, is dreadfully frosty, all through sour looks and haughty miens. I must confess, I don't understand what you mean when you say anything we love cannot kill us. I love Joe Thomson as never man was loved, and now he has forsaken me, and married Susan Lawson, I am dying by inches of love. I have heard learned men say experience is the only conclusive argument, and I am experiencing the sad truth that love can kill. Day by day I am withering away, like a plant deprived of water and sunshine. You have taken no notice, but Mrs. Aslawn is never done asking me what is wrong. I say nothing, yet all the time love is breaking my body as it has broken my heart. Jesus, too, died of a broken heart. Love killed Him !'

'Very good, Jane ; but you must remember it is possible to make a wrong use of experience,' Rosa remarked. 'If I could make my meaning clear, I think you will agree that love cannot kill, simply because love is the very food of life, nay, is life. It is not your love for Joe Thomson that is eating out all your healthy life, but his infidelity and ingratitude, and your repining craving for his love, which is murdering you. If you read the life of Christ correctly, you will find it was His meat and drink to do the will of His Father in heaven, *i.e.* He joyed to work for humanity, revealing God as a near, inspiring parent ; and His great self-denying love for mankind was the very life of His life. Reproach, however, falsehood, infamy, and injustice, and the gross bigotry and fiendish superstition of Satanic hate, put Him to death, broke His great heart, and overwhelmed His seraphic spirit in chaos and darkness. I do not condemn your love even for an unfaithful lover ; for true love is ever love acting in a kind, generous way, even if by so acting it should be heaping coals of fire on the head of the unfaithful. You will now, I think, see that it is not your love, but your loss, your discontent and longing repining, which is the murdering element in Joe's unfaithfulness. Rise above these, forgive him, and soar superior to your fancied loss and injury, and you will find this suffering, forgiving love the flower and sweet perfume of life, sending health and vigour into your entire being, and ennobling all your duties and relationships.'

Grateful tears stood in Jane's eyes. Already she was resolving on a noble course of action. Like Christian when his bundle fell off at the bottom of the cross, she realized a lightness all over, and saw stretching out before her a clear-shining road, shaded by blossoming trees, and vocal with gleeful birds singing in the branches. Mere dead existence had passed away; her whole being was pulsating with new ideas, and diviner hope and life, great and grand with a purpose, had begun.

'I see it all now clear as day,' Jane replied. 'How easy we can cherish a false opinion and misleading idea, and find a pious excuse for so doing! It is splendid having some one we can confide in, and let everything out that is festering within. Already the hard pain is gone from my heart, and I feel as if your kind words had cut out a hard lump. Now I shall work; and if I sometimes feel sad when I recall my false love, I will bless Joe and his wife, and forgive him all his unfaithfulness. Ah! there is that bell again. By the bye, I forgot to tell you the company in the dining-room are impatient for you, and I know that is simply another call to see if you have turned up.'

'If it is, say I am almost ready for putting in an appearance, and as penitent as the dying thief for upsetting, or rather setting aside, the rules of my patrician home,' Rosa whispered in Jane's ear as the latter turned away to obey the summons.

'Just as I said, it was simply to inquire if your highness had returned; and I delivered the first part of your message, leaving the concluding sentence to yourself,' Jane remarked on her return. 'Oh dear, what a jolly night's talking they have had! If I mistake not, Mrs. Aslawn has been rather hard on Monsieur, but Major Wray just came in as a sort of justice-seeing second. Would you believe me, Mr. Hamilton was actually sitting blushing at Mrs. Aslawn's cutting remarks, and Monsieur was frowning with black French passion, but grinning watery smiles through his set teeth, ever addressing her as *Ma chère dame*?'

'Is the Major in the dining-room, Jane? Why did you not tell me sooner? Come, make haste,' Rosa said, wishing Jane would have done with Joe Thomson's infidelity. 'Now I will be a casting vote in the discussion. I know aunt is in a talking humour, so I expect a pleasant evening.' Jane was not in a mood to make haste; and everything Rosa sought, seemed hidden away never to be used, and all because, while pretending to be seeking out the desired article, she was set on having it all out about Joe; and her good-natured mistress, perfectly aware how things stood, allowed her to make a clean breast.

'Never mind,' Jane remarked, on bringing her narrative to a close, 'it will soon be my turn to sympathize with you in an affair of the heart, and that will be some compensation for taxing your patience just now.'

'What do you mean?' Rosa inquired.

'Just this, that any one with half an eye can see Monsieur Vance is in love with you from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot,' Jane replied. 'However, it's all right so long as you are not in love with him, only I am not so sure on that point.'

'You amuse me, Jane; why do you wish Monsieur to have no love in return?'

'Simply because I dislike him, and did from the first,' Jane replied. 'And I will break my heart if you come to grief through him. Sometimes to-night, when I have been in serving, his face had a black, murderous look. He has either some guilty secret, or is planning mischief. Another thing, he is a foreigner, and we should not mix blood. I like Major Wray, but he's not exactly like you. I believe he is twice your age, and would not agree with your writing and missionary work. Military officers, as a rule, don't care for that sort of thing. I often wish Martin Dawson had not fallen into the error of a too early, unhappy marriage. Seeing you believe in what you call kindred spirits, he is the right man for you. Perhaps he may yet get a divorce. Oh, what a sinner I am! What books he writes! I could sit over them for ever; and oh! these pensive, speaking eyes, telling more than his books! When he comes to dine I can scarcely serve for admiring him; and he seems to see everything and everybody, and ever ready with a frank, gentle word to the very meanest. Even cats and dogs creep close to him. I know he would give all he is worth to be free to make love to you. When you open your mouth, he listens with rapt admiration, and I have seen him like to spring forward and clasp you in his arms. Do you know when he speaks, I think his voice is like the stirring notes of an exquisite solo, half spoken, half sung.'

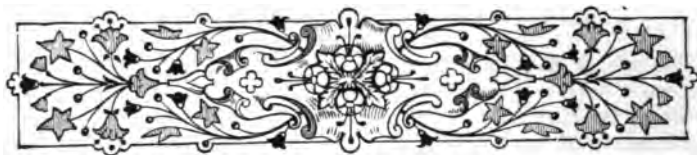
'I am indeed pleased to hear you admire Martin Dawson, Jane,' Rosa said, and tears of joy welled up from her inner heart. 'Poor, dear fellow, with his blasted life and volcano of genius, who would not love and sympathize with such! On through all his life I will be his tender friend, loving him with the most spiritual part of my nature.'

'Excuse me, but the idea is creeping into my head, and I must have it out, that you have a peculiar liking for the French general,' Jane said, putting the finishing touch on Rosa's toilet by placing a deep red half-blown rose in the bosom of her cream-coloured silk dress, which was just sufficiently low to show the snowy pureness of her bosom. 'Something tells me you are falling in love, for you just seem like I was when Joe Thomson stole my heart with his first kiss.'

'What like was that?' Rosa inquired, laughing so loud at the idea that the silvery peals reached the dining-room, and Monsieur's heart nearly leaped out of his mouth as he looked toward the door with yearning impatience. 'You are amusing, Jane. Do tell me how you felt when the subtle confluence of lips stole your poor heart. In my case I think that is bliss or misery to come.'

'Just queer all over,' Jane replied, smiling a rather watery smile, 'and ever after restless, and aye think—thinking on something or somebody. Just as you are often when I get you sitting staring, and so deaf that I speak, speak a dozen times, and never get an answer.'

'There's the bell again,' Rosa said, darting on Jane a meaning look. 'Thank you very much, I'm off to the drawing-room. Please tell my cousin, Mr. Hamilton, I am waiting for him.'



CHAPTER XXVIII.

*'AS IRON SHARPENETH IRON, SO DOTH THE FACE OF A MAN
THAT OF HIS FRIEND.'*

IN honour to her father's friend, Henry Hamilton seated Rosa on the Major's right. Monsieur, however, was immediately on her left, and these gentlemen vied in affectionate attention to the newly-arrived young lady. Her aunt looked on with silent pleasure; and the little pet dog, more favoured and familiar than all the rest, leaped on her knee, licking her face and hands in a frenzy of delight. So much attention and admiration would have spoilt most women. Rosa, however, carried all with graceful dignity. The more she was appreciated, the more she strove to be worthy; and opposition and reproach only made her more strong and self-reliant, more heroic and determined to fight for humanity. To most she was all or nothing, and to those who could in a degree understand and appreciate her rare genius and depth of sympathy, she was a fountain of endless joy, a light in darkness, a spirit of wisdom sent from heaven, annihilating the infinite distance rolling between the soul and God, and revealing to the timid and doubting the merciful, loving Father. Her own nature, however, was to a degree a mystery to herself more profound than those rolling in space or embedded in the bowels of the earth. Every day she was discovering latent powers and susceptibilities starting up to meet new exigencies, or to go out in more adoring pathos or clinging tenderness. Perhaps no great soul, or any soul, can completely sum up itself. Being progressive, experience and circumstances alone can test its inner life and moral strength; and the intenser the life, the more rapid the progress. Like its Creator, the soul has within it infinite resources; but through weakness or sluggish inaction, or sheep-like conformity to customs and established opinions, it often defeats itself. One thing, Rosa had not been long in the dining-room when she discovered Jane had some cause for her hints. In fact, these hints had made her aware of an established reality which she had never paused to analyze or consider. Now, however, the new surrender of her entire being was indeed a new discovery. Love to her was no common, everyday sentiment, lightly given and received; no scheming, limited passion, looking keenly to results and self-interest; but an absorbing feeling of adoration, so holy, tender, and self-forgetting that all creation seemed painted anew, and every living thing singing love, love. She must, however, try to go round and round the

new feeling, to understand its place and purpose in creation ; and with student-like enthusiasm, she began weaving a new science out of her new experience.

'Ah ! can this, after all, be the love Jane has fought and conquered ?' she thought, feeling the strange, subtle emotions pulsating her whole being, and bending reason and prudence as mere straws on the bosom of devotion. 'Whatever its nature or extent of continuation, I am all quivering with a new-born, exclusive passion. It may be vanity, or some mixture of desire and yearning which I shall by and by find to be non-essential to my well-being, and a hindrance to spiritual progression. If so, I shall cut it out, even if it be dear as an eye or a hand. What a complexity of powers are interlaced in one human soul ! Quick as thought varying passions sweep across the arena of consciousness, and some of our best and noblest are allowed to be swallowed up in the darkness of evil or weak self-seeking. I am set on a purpose or an object with intense yearning, with greedy hunger, so I suppose I will be put down as in love. It seems almost absurd that a being who loves all nature, who works for humanity, and bows prostrate before God, should seek to love one single being with a peculiar tenderness, with an all-absorbing devotion. To me such a love is not essential, and I must set myself to cut it out or shake it off. I grant that marriage is honourable and beautiful when twin spirits meet in a confluence of mutual attractions and sympathies ; but there is in life something greater and grander than marriage. Somehow I feel called to other work ; that, being already wedded to truth, to charity and liberty, I must stand by conscience and crucify all less noble inclinations. It may be the perfection of bliss to bask in the sunshine of mutual endearment, to drink each returning evening and morning new draughts of yet sweeter joy, and to see dutiful, happy children rising up to call you blessed. But are they not more blessed, more intensely happy, who sail majestically across the narrow strand of time, calming the storm for the timid, sharing the sorrow of the agonizing, bearing the burden of the oppressed, sympathizing with the unfortunate and desponding, and seeking, with a degree of God's love, to lead the fallen and remorseful back to the kingdom of heaven ? Is it not nobler to forego darling inclinations, and labour by word and deed to plant joy and peace in our social chaos, to reduce ignorance and suffering, and in some measure herald in the new earth wherein will dwell righteousness, than seek a mate, and retire to enjoy our portion, leaving the world to jostle on ? Yes, I feel it is nobler thus to do and be ; and I will remain free as the air, the wind, the floating fragrance of flowers, the inflow of singing ocean, the renewing influence of spring, the mystic melody of creation's anthem, as the flush of arousing thought, and the upheaving pathos of noble feeling, and the subtle power of mutual sympathy. Conscience tells me I am married to a cause, wedded to truth, and fed and made blessed by the inspiration of divine beneficence. My life and enjoyment must be the unfolding of God's love, and the inhaling of His life my strength and wisdom. Bondmen and free ; weary, restless doubter ; weird, wandering atheist ; plodding student, vainly seeking to scale the infinite by mere grasp of reason ; rapt disciple of art, chasing the beautiful and

sublime, more intensely lonely because up in the rainbow hues of colour and the mystic peaks of creating construction; enslaved debauchee, led by the demon of strong drink or the night-shade fiend of some life-absorbing opiate; fallen waif, more sinned against than sinning; sad, dejected mourner, seeking the living among the dead; and creeping, crawling miser, eating dust instead of angel's food, grinding at the crushing wheels of the Golden Calf,—each and all must share my love and sacrifice; and through self-denial, love, and devotion, I will rise nearer and nearer to God.'

A vision had been let down from heaven, and Rosa hardly knew whether she was in the body or out of it. More and more, however, she was learning the mystery of hidden wisdom, and the true value of all earthly possessions. Her eyes were dreamy and far away, peering within the invisible, and seeing and forming new scenes of beauty and order. Vance watched her until her rapt features seemed transformed, and a halo of celestial glory shone over her head.

'What will you accept for your thoughts, Rosa?' her aunt remarked. 'It is rather impolite drifting off in selfish reverie in midst of such interesting company.'

'I certainly beg the company's pardon, if I have been guilty of such gross contempt of patrician breeding,' she replied good-humouredly, laying a little extra stress on 'patrician.' 'I did not know I was specially in demand, and do not think it essential that we talk, talk for ever. Such being the case, I was simply pausing, or building castles in the air.'

'Do give us a sketch of your ether building, dear Rosa,' her cousin said. 'We have been talk, talking, as you say, on all subjects under the sun previous to your appearing; so it will be a delightful change to get up for a little into cloudland. Don't leap over the most extravagant fancy; for there is generally a germ of truth embedded in the most ethereal flight.'

With Rosa, Henry Hamilton's wish was simply such an important fact that she never for a moment thought of offering the least opposition. Perhaps their real affection for one another, and his extreme naturalness, rendered it alike impossible for him to ask anything amiss, or her to refuse. Whatever the reason, with her his very asking included receiving.

'Dear Henry, you know my extreme weakness in encouraging all your absurd whims and desires,' she replied. 'Therefore I at once tell you, I was thinking the time or epoch may never come when we can say we have fathomed our mysterious I or self. Further, I went on thinking, if our puny individuality be so infinite and complex; so capable of expansion and comprehension, of realizing and progressing; so noble as form grand conceptions of a new earth cradled in peace, and living according to the principles of righteousness; and so heroic as die in defence of such-like conceptions and beliefs, how absurd to fancy that the grandest human ideas of the character and conceptions and intentions of the great God can be aught save mere rude outlines, faint indications! Nevertheless, we are almost in our times forced to believe our clumsy confessions and our heathenish mode of living

Christianity is the mind and Spirit of God and His Son. In past eternities, long before our race had pulsated with a degree of His infinite life, He must have excelled in all wisdom and power, planning and arranging systems and scenes of life which may require eternities upon eternities to unfold them to the growing intelligence of finite wonder and adoration. In these times, however, there is on every side a howling cry that freethought and Radical fanaticism are seeking to undermine national religion. All history, if it teaches one thing more than another, teaches that the religion or religious spirit of the nation or race has always been in advance of its political life and teaching. Kings and emperors, with their governments, never pretended to manifest God and goodness, purity and peace, or even bare justice between man and man; but when religion has grown and flourished, and acted under the sway of its divine inspiration, kings and emperors, through craft and cunning policy, have gone over to the most popular, or at least to the most popish church, and made it a servant to minister to their iniquity. You will therefore be prepared to hear that the only thing I would conserve would be reverence, awe, wonder, trust, charity, and adoring love, leaving the enlightenment of the times and the love of the beautiful and sublime to form a ritual and a temple. Again, I was thinking in our few years of growth from tiny childhood to a brief period of half-educated man and womanhood, we can at best but spell out a few letters of the science of eternal life, and the character and excellence of its Author. Such being the case, all through time and on through eternity, our ever-widening experience and growing knowledge, combating error and prejudice, and acting on our latent powers, will continue bringing to the surface new discoveries of self—discoveries as wonderful as the revolving cycles of interlaced systems, revealing still more and more our affinity to God, and power to rise still nearer and nearer to His moral and spiritual perfections. Once more, I was thinking millions of years after this, as our happy souls move on in the grand order of a higher state of life, we will still be discovering new capabilities within our individualities, new impulses, new energies, as well as new spheres of duty and busy activity; that we will still be increasing in intense devotion to truth, beauty, and love; and that ever and anon, as we pause in the sublime exercise of ascending higher and loving more absorbedly, we will find a peculiar joy in conversing on these times of earthly warfare, doubt, and weak repining, wondering even then at our tenacious clinging to prejudice, our frail inclinations to vanity, and mad scheming for the airy or sordid pleasures of fame or fashion. In a word, I lost myself in happy enthusiasm for some noble cause or calling, and thought how small we make ourselves and our life, how grudging and mean we are with one another; and yet we are part and parcel of God—immortal spirits located for a short time in a frail body, in order that we may find out our individual existence, and learn to plume wing to the land of our nativity. Some trace their origin to Adam, some to apes, others to protoplasm mud, and some to bloody kings' and princes' noble blood; but I, more proud, more ancient, and more divine, fly up to God, and call Him Father, Saviour, Friend.'



CHAPTER XXIX.

*'OUR HEARTS BURNED AS WE TALKED BY THE WAY,
JOURNEYING OUT OF BONDAGE.'*

HENRY HAMILTON expressed himself delighted beyond expression at his cousin's rapt reverie, and pronounced it unique in kind and excellent in character. Her aunt, however, cut short his praise by saying :

'I wonder at you, Henry, encouraging such nonsense. Rosa, you are for ever burdening your brain, whirling and wheeling in eternities and immensities. Think as you may, it appears to me absurd loss of time for any person to wear out their brain peering into the giddy heights of God's infinitude and our future of joy or woe. There is sufficient work in less lofty regions. Our work here on earth is simply to believe, and live by faith ; and to endeavour to grasp the unseen, or to apprehend the meaning and intentions of the Infinite, or our future life, is at once daring presumption and mad suicide to the brain. Instead of running off in these speculative reveries, you should be giving yourself absolute rest. It is evident you are jaded and overdone, and no wonder after such a night ; but poor, restless, lost spirit ! you have no peace or joy save peering into mystery, and battling with clouds and darkness.'

'Work is life, aunt ; and life here is so brief that we must make haste to live. If heaven be after your orthodox idea of continual repose, *singing the new song*, I shall have plenty and to spare of rest,' Rosa replied. 'It is, as I have again and again said, disappointment and too eager desire for results, or over-sensitive power of suffering, which weary and kill. Now I have learned to put a proper value on these things, I can accomplish my work without bringing on that exhaustion of brain or nerve power you so much dread. Physically and mentally I feel robust, and so full of an over-soul of energy that I could set out on another missionary enterprise.'

'With your cousin, I was more than delighted with your definition of your rapt reflection,' Monsieur put in ; 'but I confess it took me by storm. Seeing you had just returned from visitation among the poor, and are daily familiar with scenes of suffering and squalid misery in its myriad forms, I was fully prepared to listen to your pathetic voice narrating startling tales of thrilling interest, as painful and touching as real and sad. Yet not a word as to what you have seen or done, of what you have felt and sacrificed ; but like some visionary poet, half-

prophet, half-priest, fresh from the hermit's cave of contemplation, your ethereal spirit wings to and fro in the regions of never-fading life, and above the chaotic confusion of all forms of evil and error you plant the human soul a victor, and yet reason is never for a moment lost in the vastness of the conception. You entwine the Eternal as God and Father with the filial confidence of a loved and loving child. Like the Man of Sorrows, however, I fear you are often very sad, drinking the sorrows of so many breaking hearts. It would drive me mad to move continually among disease, misery, and death.'

'I am often sad, more sad and lonely than most suppose or can understand,' she replied, 'and all because I am so powerless to remove suffering and privation from the virtuous and uncomplaining, or to move society to organize social science so as to meet the exigencies of our times. Two classes in particular wring my heart—that is, the noble and heroic, crushed and chained by evils they had no share in creating, and are completely powerless to remove; and the vast numbers of fallen women, who in most cases have been the victims of fiendish seduction, and who, from one degree of vice to another, have sunk to street pests, daring defiers of decency, mere wretched waifs. Thousands of these are women of fine sensibilities, generous impulses, and tender feelings. In many cases their goodness, beauty, and quick-operating emotions have been turned to their own destruction. Another source of evil in increasing female immorality is want of sympathy and too severe punishment for the first departure from the standard idea or position of virtue and respectability. If a woman's error is found out, be it ever so small, she is down for all time, and all by the haughty pride and mock virtue of mothers and sisters who pass them by, and open their arms and their hearts and homes to welcome the unprincipled rake or sensualist who proved their ruin. The drunkard and dirty spendthrift of both sexes, however, which swell our pauper roll, breed misery at home and create disorder in society, who swarm our closes with impurity and profanity, and fill our jails with criminals and our asylums with lunatics, are less worthy of compassion, and require all the patience, wisdom, and tact of the most sympathetic. As you say, I am generally silent in regard to what I see and hear, unless to those to whom I am compelled to appeal for help. It is sufficiently painful to know and feel such misery exists, without retailing it for food to soulless gossip. Another reason why I carefully avoid introducing one drama or picture of life into another, is because I have found that the various classes of actors have no sympathy whatever with one another. For instance, what cares the lonely, dejected child of poverty and shame; the friendless, penniless widow; or the ill-fed, barely-clad labourer; or the heart-broken, unemployed father; or despised genius, starving on one meal a day, and that one only a crust and a drink of water, for the racy flow of wit; the sharp, bounding flashes of pampered intelligence; the mystic notes of leaping, gleeful music; the groaning luxuries of modern gluttony; the massive crystal and sparkling wine; the airs and graces and grand display of evening dress; the indefinable luxuries and vain excesses of the drawing-room; and the languishing indolence of aristocratic pride and pomposity? Would it not be fiendish barbarity

to speak or even hint of these sides of life, or to dwell on the enchantment of learning, the sweets of plenty, and the rest of ease—of the beauty and attractiveness of social life, whose surroundings are inspiring pictures, rich, heavy carpets, easy-chairs, splendidly furnished beds, entertaining books, fragrant conservatories like scenes in fairyland, and meat stores where home and foreign corn and fruit abound? If we will not share these blessings, mercy forbids us to add torment to torture by instructing the poor in regard to the wealthy and comfortable. Again, the majority of the wealthy and comfortable care little for the lean, skeleton figures of poverty and misfortune, the tearful agony of the bereaved, or the incoherent ravings of the miserable debauchee.'

'Rosa is right,' Hamilton remarked; 'we are yet very far from living Christianity. We have got the length of preaching about Christ, and making a paying speculation of our profession, but that is about all. I had no idea, fair cousin, that you had such a profound knowledge of society. It is a fact that we would be considered an insufferable bore were we to introduce the cause of the working classes, or the unequal distribution of labour and reward, into fashionable company. No doubt wages have risen considerably for many classes of workmen and women of late years, but rental, taxes, and provisions have also increased; and if thirty shillings only go as far as twenty did when trade was less flourishing and wages lower, where is the worker's gain? Another injustice with advance of rental, there has been but small improvement in house accommodation; and we still find the majority of the worst paid workmen and women compelled to live in hovels, with fever and consumption lurking in every entry and at every threshold. I am a Tory, but I am more a man; and it is an awful iniquity for any country professing to be Christian, to have mere children drudging in a field or toiling in a factory, as ignorant as the brutes who perish, cruelly robbed of all the sunny joy and bounding liberty of childhood. Of course, things are said by some to be coming slowly round, and that the people are, all over, beginning to believe in the gospel of self-help. Nevertheless, far down in the slums of every city we find the very poorest huddled together in diseased cesspools, without the power or means of bettering their condition. Surely something ought to be done for these!'

'Spoken like a man, Hamilton,' Monsieur replied. 'As you said, Miss Anderson has indeed a profound, common-sense knowledge of society. For instance, when adverting to male sensualism, and the gross injustice as well as the immorality of the laws and customs of conventionalism, which brands the offence of women with everlasting infamy, and has scarcely a censure or rebuke for her male partner, struck me as peculiarly insulting to man,—insulting in that it either considers him so irrational as to have no intelligent command of his passions, or such an inhuman monster as not to be amenable to law and reason. Thank goodness! man is neither the one nor the other; and it is nobler to admit our error and reform the false, than to sneak under the whitewashing injustice of popular ignorance and prejudice.'

'I fully agree with you, Monsieur,' the Major remarked. 'We male genders are rather too much inclined to take all the butter to our side of the plate. In other words, it appears to me we hear far too much of

our superiority and peculiar rights. If it be that we as men are mentally superior,—which I deny,—and have a peculiar right to the best paying professions and trades, and to the largest share of education, and exact all the sacrifice to be done for us instead of by us, surely it is monstrously absurd, as well as an outrage on reason and common sense, and likewise deadening to all manly instincts and noble impulses, for us to exact from women moral superiority. The idea is a pure subversion of all the powers and faculties of our nature, as well as of the laws and principles of justice and righteousness. If we claim mental superiority, if we by unjust monopoly have a more liberal education, we should know more of science, of morality, and the laws of well-being. However, some more philosophic than I am may say morality is not dependent on intellectual enlightenment or the polish of education, but is inherent in all alike, and rests in the conscience and the will.

‘In these times morality is indeed a vague word, with as many different definitions as our theological dogmas,’ Rosa observed. ‘Nevertheless, it appears to me that true morality, like pure religion, is ever the same in kind and essence. Whatever mistaken notions each age or nation may entertain of these centre principles of purity and holy reverence for the true and beautiful, with you, Major, I say that man’s mental superiority is all assumed. In the far-back ages his greater physical strength, no doubt, first instigated the horrid barbarity of women’s subordination. In these ancient times, we know all mere brute force or physical prowess was extolled by historians, sung by poets, and on canvas immortalized by the high priests of art as the greatest of heroics. Now, however, we have gone round and round bone and muscle; and while each cannot be too grateful for a strong, healthy physical constitution, these are only valuable in giving expression to the diviner miracle of mind. It may be that morality finds its power of doing and being in what is called conscience and will. Reason tells us it must be so. Nevertheless, the more enlightened the understanding, and the more educated the mind, the more just, comprehensive, strong, and unbiased the conscience. In like manner, the will must gain strength for right or wrong by increase of mental enlightenment. The very fact that women have all along maintained such an innate love for the pure and true even in mental darkness and cruel subordination, is an earnest and evidence that her complete emancipation will be an immense boon to society all over. Those who endeavour to intimidate women from coming to the front as rational, responsible creatures, who should take an active and intelligent interest in all the social and political prosperity of the country, are, unconsciously it may be, murdering and dwarfing the better part of themselves into slavish imbecility. These evidently forget that nothing is unwomanly save ignorance, silly vanity, and weak pandering to any passion or prejudice which hinders true progression. If the future is to be great in mental grandeur, and physical beauty, and moral purity, our sons and daughters must have intelligent, common-sense mothers, who can, under all circumstances, be the “shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”’

‘Hear, hear!’ the gentlemen chimed; and the Major remarked, ‘I feared we were in for a philosophic or metaphysical discussion on conscience; but Miss Anderson, with her usual clearness of critical acumen,

has cut right through the mysticism of mere definition, and established conscience as a progressive power or faculty, gaining in strength and purity by every evolution of more advanced life. In regard to the vexing question of women's rights, etc., I think the very fact that woman heretofore has borne so patiently and persevered so heroically for her true place and position, is an earnest that she can and will exercise a beneficent and redeeming influence on all nations when once the majority are fully alive to their work and high mission. Think of it as we may from any standpoint whatever, we will find man's assumed superiority, either as man or as member of society, as lawgiver, artist, author, or merchant, an unjust assumption; and many of the domestic duties which all regard as woman's peculiar province, call for shrewd, intelligent management, as well as task the moral virtues to the utmost. The truth is, every right-thinking man cannot but regard the subjection of women as one of the greatest evils which has befallen humanity. I confess I never come in contact with, or see from a distance, a degraded, down-trodden woman, but I feel that her ignorance, foolishness, or degradation is heaven, and all the purest and noblest in religion, lost to a wide circle of friends. Therefore, I say with Miss Anderson, that if we would be a great nation we must have noble, intelligent, educated mothers, pure-minded, generous-souled mothers, for only these can bring forth children with sound bodies and sane minds; and when children grow into youths and maidens, a wise, educated mother is a pillar of strength, an avenging angel, a heavenly light, and an almighty power in the time of fiery temptation. I may be wrong, but I think the rapid increase of insanity, both in our country and America, is to a great extent traceable to the evil of female ignorance and subjection.'

'Dear Major, I am spell-bound listening to such beautiful, inspiring sayings,' Mrs. Aslawn said. 'In all history I do not think we will find the son of a really noble mother adding to the vices or crimes of his times. It is indeed pleasant to mark the unity of feeling existing among us in regard to the immense value of home training, and the rights of woman as a reasonable, responsible, free agent. Think of it as we may (and there is on this, as well as on all other subjects, great diversity of opinion; and while we all deplore all forms of bigotry, we must allow each and all the liberty of their opinion), the want of the times is an educated, sensible, intensely earnest womanhood. All over society is poor and cold for woman's large sympathies and tender love. Men generally are simply what women make them. Therefore, we need women with reverent, spiritualized souls, with abundance of knowledge in their heads, and large, charitable love in their hearts. The universal need of all Europe and America is for free recognition of woman's mission and aim. Therefore it seems I have simply to echo your conclusions, Major, and say all the one-sided opposition raised against a more liberal and classic education for woman,—more recognition of her rights as a reasonable, intelligent member of society,—is simply man, by ignorance and stupidity, stamping out his own life in its threefold conditions or relations of physical, mental, and moral grandeur. In a word, every wrong or injustice heaped on woman is simply a suicidal thrust at man's physical health, mental greatness, and spiritual purity.'

'*Ma chère dame*,' Monsieur replied, 'I think your most reasonable and touching remarks have gone deepest into the vexed question of women's rights. On no narrow or mere controversial foundation have you based your plea, but on the divine principles of law, reason, and common sense. As a whole humanity must stand or fall, and the sooner there is identity of interest and unity of purpose in all branches of industry the better. It is a popular but mistaken idea that women will become unwomanly, arrogant, and overbearing in influence, or lose taste for home duties and all the womanly traits of character now so admired, if colleges and all art and science studies are to become common property. Such reasoning is, however, as absurd as irrational. If liberal education and just reward for labour and honest recognition of talent render man more manly, happy, free, and independent, and also make him a more honourable and useful member of society, the same advantages can only add to the womanliness of woman, and enlarge and intensify all her tastes and tendencies. Were it not on account of the huge amount of popular error and ignorance on such subjects, no sane man would waste time discussing such a crying blunder. All the educational advantages we can give to women will only make the beautiful differences of sex more beautiful; mothers will be more motherly, sisters more sisterly. I do not know if I have made my meaning clear; but since I have caught the inspiration of Miss Anderson, I seem in some vague way to understand that the great, good Being who holds the mystery of life in the centre of His almightiness, intends all His creatures to be healthful and happy, pure and blessed, even in this world; and that no curse, save that of man defeating himself, rests on earth; and that some day, in the far future it may be, mankind universally will arrive at true conceptions of life and life's meaning, and God's relation to His creatures.'

'It appears to me you have made your meaning clear as noonday,' the Major remarked, 'and your meaning I apprehend to be, that you now more and more fully believe it possible for frail humanity to progress toward perfection, or a state somewhat akin to what we are dimly perceiving to be the rudiments of perfection; that while time remains, new discoveries of the infinite resources of nature, and diviner conceptions of the Author of life, will dawn on the human mind, and international organizations and wiser governments will spring up; and that the highest mental and moral attainments will necessarily exert a peculiar and leading influence for good on the less advanced; that art, science, and industry, music, painting, and philosophy, will ever find wider scope, nobler themes, and more liberal reward; and that equality in right and justice between man and man and nation and nation will not, as many suppose, result in insipid conformity, and a universal hum; but, on the contrary, healthy criticism and heroic effort will foster and encourage all real excellence in art, science, and classic attainments, and more and more stimulate true honesty and enterprise in all our productive industries, and afford wider scope for diversity of talent, character, and ingenuity, alike in families and nations.'

'Many thanks for thus putting my vague gropings into consistent

and reasonable expression,' Monsieur said. 'By way of extending the same idea, I think you will agree with me that art is doing much to bring about purer conceptions of God, and to inspire finer sensibilities and aspirations after a nobler life;—that is, that art is struggling to reproduce nature, not as it is reflected in history alone, but as it sprung, and is ever springing, from the wisdom and love of the Divine Source of life; that it is striving with almost supernatural subtlety of intuition to recreate within the soul a passion and reverence for the soul of nature underlying all its more obvious manifestations; in a word, that art is working hard, and receiving small reward, to make all the duties and relationships of daily life beautiful gates leading right into the kingdom of heaven. Sometimes I think the human intellect is just awakening to its innate, limitless capabilities; and science, that wonderful transformer of the very elements of earth and air, is simply bit by bit emerging from narrow and absurd theories into the more comprehensive revelation of the divine purpose, gigantic unity, and wonderful harmony of all we know by life and life manifestations.'

'It would appear you three have got into the third heaven of speculative prophecy,' Hamilton remarked. 'To me, however, who am a sort of matter-of-fact, plodding fellow, these forecastings have a strange effect. The fact is, I am so taken up finding a sort of true or consistent way for myself, that I cannot shape any intelligent conclusion in regard to mankind generally, or even the future of our own nation. To do right and be right requires such a continual warring with the flesh and spirit, that I can never see a clear day's real progress in my own life, let alone an epoch of universal advancement. If for a time you were down in our social valleys, trailing up the muck and mire of our weltering ignorance, drunkenness, and pauperism, you are now evidently fancying all are educated and able to appreciate and understand the elevating and expanding influences of art and science. These, you must remember, appeal to the more spiritual aspirations of the soul, and we must descend before we ascend—that is, we must first educate and enlighten the weltering masses in the rudiments of what science and art really are, before we can expect from them appreciation of such excellence. We speak of nature as if it alone could raise the soul, forgetting that the soul must be in reception of the divine spirit of nature before it can read one lesson of that most divine and intensely spiritual revelation. However, with all my Conservatism, I am glad Radical politics and Radical theology are working together to educate and emancipate the ignorant, and to sweep away delusive dogmas and mere baptized forms of Judaism.'

'The Radicals will by and by do something to herald in the times we have been forecasting,' Rosa said. 'However, for us there can be no letting go of oars; on, on we must pull, against the black, seething billows of disease, famine, ignorance, sensualism, drunkenness, fiendish bigotry, and a mad host of war and unjust aggrandisement upholders; and even if our little band often seem defeated, and our cause a losing one, we have right on our side, and one of us shall make a million of mere pretenders wither up like stubble before the consuming breath of divine righteousness.'

'When Rosa waxes eloquent, I consider a crisis or climax has come,' Mrs. Aslawn said, rising to lead the way to the drawing-room. 'Therefore I take this opportunity to step on to mirth and music.'

'Please give us a real Scotch song, *ma chère mademoiselle*,' Monsieur said, as he led Rosa to the pianoforte and took his position to turn over her music. *O Sing to me the Auld Scotch Sangs*, her melodious, deep-toned voice swelled. The pathos and touching yearning of her impassioned soul were so arousing that her aunt's sympathetic spirit bounded to the stirring lay, and she was again a child, hearing her mother crooning her to rest, and the very face of her father smiled on her; and old fields, the winding burns, the rich clover meadows, and rugged crags of Scotland stood before her, and sweet, mellow tears ran down her time-worn cheeks. Hamilton and the Major, too, were far away, lost in a luxury of conflicting emotions. The singer was so completely one with her song that she carried them with her through every varying emotion. Even Monsieur felt it was a song specially for him, a very old French song. If the words were provincial, the sentiment was cosmopolitan. Every son and daughter under the blue arch of space has some old song their mother sang; and these social, aspiring men and women regaled themselves in sad, sweet memories, and anew trimmed their silver lamp of hope, and realized that man does not live by bread alone, but by every inspiration which cometh flowing in from heaven above, and all the beautiful influences and sympathies of social communion. Then the inanity of the grave, the insanity of self-debasement, the feverish lust of fame and false ambition, the meanness and foolishness of pride and pomposity, and the desperate scramble for mere earthly position, all vanished like soap bubbles in the air, and mind and soul sought and found a city which hath a foundation, a world and a home whose pillars are truth and righteousness, and whose builder and centre of attraction is God.

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CHAPTER XXX.

ONE DEEP, DEEP DRAUGHT OF MYSTIC LOVE.

MONTHS had passed, still Hamilton and Monsieur continued their stay with Mrs. Aslawn. Hamilton had asked and received a year's absence, if no special active service called his regiment to the field; and Monsieur's time being also, to a great extent, at his own disposal, they were in no hurry to leave such congenial and rare company. Both were great admirers of nature, as well as keen sportsmen, and they often made local journeys, staying away sometimes as long as ten days. However, every return gave increasing evidence of Monsieur's growing adoration for Rosa, and she, too, seemed to feel their absence unbearable, and to awake into new life at the very sound of Vance's voice. It was evident he was fast becoming her shadow, following her like a chained slave; and when she went on her philanthropic work, he was sure to turn up at some corner and walk her home. With his increase of love there also came increase of sadness, and when alone he often seemed possessed of mad fancies, and strange, muttering regrets of a ruined, blasted life welled up from his haunted recesses. Rosa's presence, however, always acted like a sunbeam; her voice was sweetest music, her smile an almighty spell, making him thrill and throb with undefinable bliss; and when he touched her hand, everything was changed, and all creation dressed in vespers glory, and vibrating with tinkling melody. His love for Rosa was adoration of the deepest and purest kind, love such as suffering, sacrifice, or even death cannot chill. Strange that one human being can so influence another! but he would follow her like a chained slave, and die at her feet like a faithful dog. 'If I must lose her, yet I will die at her feet,' he would say as he wrestled with his strong passion. Again he would wonder why such gloomy forebodings haunted his mind. What could separate them? He had done nothing worse than thousands of men who lived and loved. Perhaps the difference was that he was better than most men, and his sins were ever before him. If he should win her, and yet feel compelled to steal away, and allow the burning fires of his consuming love to prey on his secret soul, how could he live without her who had been to him a very redeemer, spanning the awful immensity rolling between his soul and God? Separated in spirit they could never be, for she was coiled round his inner being. So dearly, so fondly and piously loved, she was part and parcel of his life, and physical separation and continuity of

time could only increase its strength and refine all the dross. With them the course of true love seemed smooth; for Rosa loved as ardently as Monsieur, and had no thoughts, feelings, or desires apart from him. Every day she more and more discovered she loved Vance with rapt adoration, and that above everything and every one she would love him and cling to him through good and bad report. In her sight he was a king-man, the man of men, great, honest, and all through and through honourable and upright. Had her love been less generous, pure, and absorbing, she would have discovered dust as well as deity in her idol. Rosa, however, had the rare faculty of weaving ideal grandeur around the meanest, and, as a matter of course, she haloed Monsieur with every imaginable grace, and basked in the sunshine of his ardent love until life seemed too replete, and she only sighed for continuity to complete the deep, deep draught of mutual blessedness.

Mrs. Aslawn, however, viewed the French general in a different light. She frankly admitted he was no ordinary man, but his powers, according to her ideas, were subtle and dangerous, capricious and selfish, and his moody abstraction and fits of passionate tenderness either told of a past of disappointment and reckless excesses, or of a vein of hereditary insanity. He was immensely wealthy, and Rosa had need of money to carry out her philanthropic schemes. Nevertheless, neither his money nor position were sufficient to overcome the bad impression she had formed concerning him. Once or twice Monsieur had been rather pointed in his condemnation of some of her favourite prejudices and patrician pride, and she almost hated him, and eagerly waited for an opportunity to brand him hypocrite and pretender.

'Well, well, all over it is just frail human life; and my cosmopolitan, strong-minded niece, wedded to a purpose and married to truth, is playing the silly, love-sick girl so very openly and artlessly that I am not less astonished than ashamed,' the old lady rather ironically remarked one fine afternoon, as she rather unexpectedly, as they thought, came on Rosa and Monsieur sitting in a little honeysuckle arbour, with clasped hands, and love beaming in their every feature. Hamilton, not far away, and ever acting as *cat's-paw* or go-between, seeing the mess Monsieur was in, called him away to inspect some particular insect he had just caught, but which unfortunately had been already dead for some days. 'If I had been too hasty in concluding, I saw and heard unmistakeable evidences of the *old, old story*,' Mrs. Aslawn continued; 'the confused exit of your companion, and your tell-tale blushes, not to mention the echo of smacking kisses and the squeezing of tender fingers, all confirm my growing suspicion.'

'Am I blushing, aunt? What suspicions do you mean?' Rosa inquired, rising and making room for her august relative.

'Since Henry can play *cat's-paw* so very beautifully, I shall not satisfy him I have scented out a secret,' the old lady knowingly replied. 'I can see his sly eyes watching us and his ears strained, while he is pretending to examine the latest discovery to the British Antiquarian Museum. Therefore, I will answer your queries once we get inside. Now the afternoon is so fine, I intend enjoying a nameless reverie among flowers and fruit.'

An hour later, while Rosa was dressing her for dinner, Mrs. Aslawn remarked: 'By the way, adverting to my intrusion on your love *little à little* in the garden, I must tell you my suspicion is that you are allowing a silly passion for that conscience-haunted Frenchman to gain complete mastery over your prudence and common sense. You need not start, and pretend to look astonished. No doubt you fancy you have a right to choose your lover, but I had expected you to know no Protestant should enter into love or marriage with a Romanist. Where now, Rosa, your fine ideas of spiritual marriages? I tell you your transcendent idealism is all rubbish, mere wordy moonshine. If you cannot read an unholy secret or a taint of hereditary insanity in Monsieur's moody despondency, where now your nice critical acumen? And what of the intuitions of mutual affinities? Mutual balderdash! What says St. Paul of being yoked with unbelievers? But, alas! in your case it is hard knowing which is most profane, the daring freethinker or the superstitious Romanist bowing to graven images of marble and stone. Of course, I can see you are ready to tell me St. Paul had no special revelation on marriage and many other questions on which he advanced opinions as a man to men. However, apart from all authority on the subject, as your guardian I utterly condemn your conduct as rank madness.'

'You astonish me, aunt,' Rosa said, striving to recover her composure, 'in that I fail to understand wherein your words and warning apply to my friendship for Monsieur. I never thought of marriage, and he has never hinted at such a thing, therefore the impious evil you so dread is still far away. However, if I am acting inconsistently or playing the silly fool, I must try and mend my ways. You certainly know best. In speaking, however, of our religious beliefs, I think you are cruelly unjust. From your standpoint you are sincere in all your articles of faith and belief, but I think it very narrow and intolerant to make your standard of faith and belief in regard to God's dealings with individuals the measure of your judgment of others. I do not deny that I have, either willingly or unwillingly, grown to love Monsieur; and his beliefs and opinions are simply the manifestation of the extent of his enlightenment and freedom of conscience, and the spirituality of his aspirations. He is fast steering away from all narrow moorings of priestly delusions, and as he learns more and more of the unity of all God's perfections and intentions, and draws nearer to Him as a beloved son, he will steadily clear his mind of all superstition. In regard to myself, my profane freethinking is an old story, and I am weary offering any justification for my liberty of conscience and faith in God more than in all tradition or even ancient miraculous inspiration. To every age He has a miraculous message if only we listen. Therefore, aunt, I am longing intensely for an active life in accordance with my beliefs; for I feel that the universal conscience is becoming benumbed, and that we are drifting into trying times. It is too much every man for himself and his party, and few for justice, for humanity, and God. You seem afraid of the French general carrying me off, but be assured no such romance is before me. All through I will be plain Rosa. Not that I do not possess capabilities for love; on the contrary, the bent of my nature leads that

way. In meditation, in adoration, in mutual affinities of endearment, loving and being beloved, and following after the pleasures of art and science, would be heaven on earth; but I have other work to perform. Somehow I feel I shall spend and be spent in warring with the complex forms of religious, social, and political evils and errors of our day.'

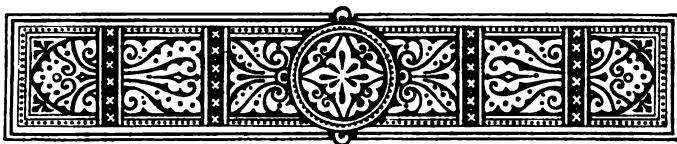
'I can only repeat, foolish dreamer of dreams,' her aunt said, 'in later ages you fancy history will embalm your memory, and record the actual triumphs of your ideal dreams. You say Vance has not hinted at marriage, yet he hangs around you like a night-shade of evil, keeping all honest-intentioned men away. His silence only the more confirms my opinion of him. Why seek to monopolize your time and attention if marriage be not in the idea? Friendship is more generous, more free and less capricious in its out-goings. Poor Rosa, in love, as in all other matters, your freethinking is gradually leading you into a mess. A broken heart and a damaged character will be a miserable return for your lavish generosity. You do not know what you are doing. Can we take fire into our bosom and not be burned? Now-a-days men and women speak of experimenting in vice and all forms of degrading habits, as if the very touch of evil was not defilement. Rosa, be warned in time. Daily fly to the cross. Lose all faith in self, and with your soul in the dust of humiliation, cry out, "Unclean; God be merciful to me a sinner."'

'I shall daily endeavour to take up the cross of self-denial and noble determination to combat evil within and without,' she replied. 'The purer the life and the holier the soul, the more of cross-bearing falls to the true Christian. You love to go over the most suggestive or pathetic of Scripture texts or sayings; but I believe in discovering within my soul traces of God's nature and attributes, and to write a New Testament, or at least add to the Acts of the Apostles, by a real life of active goodness. You will condemn me, I fear, as still more and more profane when I ask you to bear with me and suspend your judgment when I say I almost hate and despise the prayer for self. Somehow I feel it alike dishonouring to God and the individual soul to be for ever beg, begging for personal favours, personal graces, and acceptance, as if God would not feed and nourish our I's and me's if we could be sufficiently brave to lose self in humanity and really do our duty. Surely it is possible to live one short day in favour with heaven? Say and think as you may, I feel convinced self-denial, active charity, and tender sympathy is the sweetest blessing we can bestow on mankind, and the shortest way home to the heart of God. If I am wrong, I shall abide by conscience and the rich wealth of love; and if God damn me for my daring profanity, I shall be happy in hell by finding I am the only lost sheep. Methinks I could enjoy eternal banishment from God and all mankind, if the only echoes I could hear to my solitary musings were vibrating melody of universal blessedness. Jesus gave His earthly life for humanity, and it was no mean sacrifice to save the elect. Therefore to save mankind, to drain sin and annihilate suffering, to see or know every man, woman, and child that ever lived or shall live, happy, I would willingly give my immortal life.'

'Rosa, you terrify me. These are strange words,' her aunt replied.

'I might add, splendid sayings, but, alas! only mere words. Would you be happy in your solitary banishment from eternal mutual affinities, if you heard the melody of Monsieur's voice breathing a tale of love in some happy saint's ear? If Vance was with you, I believe you would enjoy any society or any state of existence. You no doubt think me unreasonable in ever warning you against the influence of that man; but I see deeper than the surface. I grant you, we have sufficient proof of his social standing and wealth; but you should remember it requires very little to constitute a Frenchman's respectability. It is no uncommon thing for a French gentleman of very ordinary means to have more wives than one, and generally more mistresses than wives, and the latter more beloved and honoured than the former. The truth is, such is the state of French morals and manners, that a man of wealth or good position is not worth much in view of his companions unless he have two or three homes or harems of lady-loves. Therefore you had better be prepared to discover that your very honourable Monsieur is but a half-penitent representative of that class, a runaway seducer. Man never sighs and starts in solitude for nothing. An outraged conscience makes ghosts in sunbeams, evil spirits in the wind, and summer fragrance is but the voice of an avenging God.'

Mrs. Aslawn withdrew, and Rosa sat gazing on the rich carpet like one seeing God and heaven dropping out of existence, and helpless humanity weltering in its blood, strangling the life it could not sustain. She was very lonely and very sad, but she did not shrink from her position. Huge difficulties hemmed her in on every side, and horrid suspicions had been aroused; but the more Vance was suspected and defamed, the more she loved him. If it was possible—but to her sensitive, pure soul it seemed impossible—he was guilty and unhappy because of some outraged law in his nature, he had the more need of her love and sympathy. Whatever the past, his love for her was pure and generous, and he was still even more a king-man, a hero in her sight. Her aunt had so grown to revere tradition and doctrinal dogma as the essentials and all of religion, that she had no sympathy with a soul seeking to clear itself of error and soar away in liberty to the bosom of the Eternal. For his country Monsieur was depressed, and when he was long absent, Rosa longed for him with a yearning anxiety which made her wonder at the ardour and devotion of her passion. In his presence, however, there was nothing to indicate the burning volcano which smouldered within; and poor Monsieur, battling with his consuming uncertainty, never dreamt of the quenchless flame of endearing reciprocity blazing within her calm, nay, sometimes cool exterior. When he was ardent and demonstrative, she was coy, teasing, and untameable; but when he was gloomy, sad, and tossed with restless despondency, she was all love and attention; and, truly glad for pity and sympathy, and too noble for expecting a full surrender of such a heart and soul, poor, miserable Monsieur regaled himself in her generous sympathy. To him it was very tender, very dear, and so like love that he drank deep, deep draughts, afraid to question or exact, lest the heavenly gift, the pure, blissful joy, vanish like a dream.



CHAPTER XXXI.

SOUNDS IN THE NIGHT.



PICNIC had been arranged between the Haddingtons and Claytons to have Rosa and her friends out for a day; and, as a matter of course, the good intention and honour were fully appreciated and made use of by our three friends. Although the autumn was well advanced, the weather was very genial, and the country beautiful beyond description. On that particular morning, flooding sunshine made glorious the face of nature, and crowned the mountain-tops with golden hues of sublimated loveliness. When out in green fields, roaming by murmuring streams, straying in varied sylvan retreats, or climbing rugged hill-sides, Rosa was gay and sportive as a young lamb, free and bright as the flower-loving butterfly. Such being the case, in the hallowed serenity of unfrequented shades, Monsieur found supreme pleasure watching the changing vivacity of her manner, and listening and replying to the continuous flow of her suggestive conversation. On the evening prior to the picnic, strange emotions quivered in his bosom, not unmixed with pain, lest some awkward arrangement should separate him from her side. The truth is, Rosa was so identified with nature, that Vance could only admire its beauty through her radiant smiles, and she found in nature such a complete exponent of all her varying moods, that whether sad or gay, speculative or logical, whether reasoning or soaring on poetic wing, she found figures and forms of eloquent language whereby to express her most subtle thought or most impassioned feeling. In a word, nature was to her a gorgeous temple of mysterious sympathy, in which she could unbosom her innermost reverence and adoration to her God and Father.

The expected holiday had dawned, and Rosa was unusually early astir making preparations. Her aunt had never seen her niece make the least change in her habits of rising and orderly preparing for any outgoing, and she made for her dressing-room to see if anything unusual had happened. As she expected, she found Rosa like a caged bird, all impatience to be off to the woods and glens; but on her death-like face she could also see traces of recent tears. It was also evident her presence was more annoying than helpful, and that Rosa, striving to be composed and natural, was doing and saying all manner of absurd

things, and ever and anon turning aside to dash away a falling tear, which seemed to well up unbidden from the centre of her being.

'I can see it is interesting, if not agreeable, to drop on people unexpectedly,' her aunt remarked. 'I confess, however, that I am rather astonished, as I had expected a sincere worshipper of the truth, such as you profess to be, could have no cause for secret sorrow. Remember, secret wounds are apt to run on to cancerous sores if too long pent up, so you had better make a clean breast at once. Pride goeth before a fall, and fine ideas without profound, sound principles are but chaff and stubble before the hot blasts of trying temptation.'

Rosa darted a pleading look at her aunt, but the old lady took no notice, and continued :

'Poor, foolish creature ! I can see it all. So it ever is. All so-called strong-minded men and women are ever consummate fools in love matters. The one hour they fall down to a poor, sinful creature in prostrate adoration ; the next, mad jealousy and all the kindred passions make them madmen and fiends. What a silly, unphilosophic part you are playing in thus allowing a single sexual passion to overmaster all your Utopian ideas of being wedded to a cause, devoted to truth. You have almost learned me to adopt strong language, but I feel I do not overdraw the fact when I ask, Where now is your fidelity to God, to conscience, and humanity ? Ah ! human-like, all these must wait till you court and marry your Frenchman and run away to your paradise of mutual affinities. If you only sigh and weep in solitude, no wonder you are daily becoming like a wandering ghost. Rosa, I am in earnest. What does all this mean ? I love you with a love I fear you are incapable of understanding before you in turn have loved and lost, borne children, and given them up to God. Then you will understand a mother's heart of yearning anxiety. To see you pining, wasting, and almost dying with pent-up love for a man I daily more and more dislike is worse than death. There must be some secret cause for this sorrow. Seeing your lover is daily at your feet, smiles should be for ever dimpling your cheeks with more than usual loveliness, and the joy of love should be adding unwonted lustre to your eyes. After all, you are finding your fine idealism is ill calculated to bear the tear and wear of everyday real life. Poor, dear Rosa ! it must be very hard to know so much, to believe so much, to hope so much, to feel so generously, and imagine such glowing fancies, and yet find the love of your soul, the life of your life, a cankering worm.'

'Despite our differences of opinion, I know and feel you are my truest, tenderest friend,' Rosa replied. 'And I have never abused that love and tender care. Not for one half-day have I ever kept from you my most secret thought, and I feel pained that you should for a moment suppose that I could be so false as hide any secret sorrow from you. Yet I confess you have some cause to mistrust me, seeing I am unable to deny the fact that I have been indulging in sentimental reveries. Under all circumstances, I am one who carries all my sorrows into the solitude of my inner chamber, and in presence of the unseen, yet ever present, pours out all my complaint and seeks direction and strength. Not comfort, mark ; for in our times of lax morality,

insincerity, and sham, every true man and woman must be acquainted with sorrow and familiar with grief, and all they need is simply divine wisdom and strength to endure. Do not, however, go away with the false idea that I am allowing pent-up love to sap my soul and drain my vital energies. Is it not true that out of deep sorrow and keen suffering the noblest heroism, as well as the divinest music and most arousing literature, has sprung? I believe my advanced views and high-set nervous temperament render suffering and sorrow inevitable. However, if I learn a new science, or see more deeply into the human soul, and come nearer to God in sympathy, the compensation will be infinite.'

'That is simply begging the question, Rosa; nay, it is a sort of confession that some unfortunate circumstance makes your love a cross rather than a joy and a crown,' her aunt said. 'Rosa, do you love—that is, can you let your whole heart and soul go out to one individual? I often think fame, activity, or general beneficence are parts of laws, or the objects and subjects which can to a degree fill your soul.'

'Perhaps you are right, aunt, in thinking I need a wide sphere for my love,' she replied. 'But it is a sort of insult to ask if I can love. I am all love through and through. I have been formed for love, and such being the case, I must be able to love a single individual fondly and truly; yet that love and tenderness cannot stem the oversoul which flows out toward all mankind. If you who have been my mother and constant companion, can so misunderstand or fail to comprehend me, no wonder all ages so misunderstand the great, good God. The truth is, humanity is yet but in its infancy, simply beginning to spell out a few of the first letters of the grand spiritual life Jesus inaugurated. Love is my life, and love is the cause of my present sorrow. Often when my heart burns and beats with love for the sorrows and sufferings of mankind, it swells so large and beats so fast that I feel as if I could cleave space and dive right into the presence of the Eternal, asking from Him redress. I am specially sad for poor, miserable Vance, for I know he is miserable and unhappy, and I love him with a love so real, tender, enduring, and all-embracing, that I feel as if our twin souls had existed together from all eternity, one in aim, inclination, aspiration, and desire.'

Mrs. Aslawn turned and wiped away her falling tears. Rosa had been more honest and open than she expected, and she only said:

'Rosa, I do trust you will enjoy the day, but after these confessions, I had rather you had been at home. See that you conduct yourself with becoming prudence and dignity outside. Lovers in general are a disgust, carrying their own feelings and capricious moods into society, putting sensible people to blush, and giving food for greedy gossip. The very sensible and learned Misses Clayton are to be of your company, and will have sharp, critical eyes, so, I pray, make use of these hints. The question, however, is, How comes it Monsieur is a poor, miserable, unhappy man? We have yet some time left, and unless you wish me to be unhappy all the day, you will clear away the mists your hints have created.'

'Last night you left us alone in the drawing-room,' Rosa began, 'and we enjoyed some hours of rich conversation. For a time Vance

was unusually gay and happy. His whole soul seemed transformed with tender love, and his countenance shone with supernatural beauty. From one theme to another we tripped so freely, and life seemed so full and complete, that we embraced in a rapture of bliss, and confessed our mutual passion. Suddenly, however, I could see a shade of sorrow and regret in his eyes. Far away into the future or the past he was gazing, and something towered high over our love, demanding his deepest attention. He grew excited and restless, and I proposed that we part, thinking rest would calm his mind, or that he would make some explanation. When we parted, his heart seemed breaking, but he simply pressed my hand, and silently raised it to his lips, and without answering my good-night, he was gone. In bed I pondered over his strange manner, and lay long awake. I had, however, just begun to sink into the embrace of sleep, when I heard a strange, wailing, sobbing sound, like a human spirit in deep despair. I got out of bed, and went slowly along the landing, listening with bated breath and strained ears, and with sinking heart I found the sounds were coming from Monsieur's bed-room. By the time I was at his door my heart had ceased all action, my limbs were trembling, and feeling like one dying, I sank on the floor. I was powerless to move or cry, yet I could hear with more than usual acuteness, and I knew he was prostrate on the floor, with only the door between us, and I longed to call to him,—for at first I thought he was dying, and wishing to make a noise to alarm the house,—but I was spell-bound with a horrid nightmare of physical prostration; and as I lay struggling to get up, to regain power to speak and act, I learned he was not dying, but praying and sobbing for some lost object of dearest affection. With language strong and stirring, wrung from an agonized, broken heart, he cried out for some lost object, and I felt God must be very near, taking his special case in hand. I cannot explain what I felt, but I seemed to realize the immediate presence of Deity. The truth is, his soul was so troubled and melted within him, that nothing save the imparted aid of God could give calm and peace essential to enable him to live on. Did God not come in when huge sorrow and trial overtake the poor human soul, it would be consumed. I do not know if it was mother, sister, or friend, but it was some female who had filled his soul, making earth heaven, and life a joy, for whom he prayed. She is lost, but how or where I cannot tell, and he must know of her joy before he can stand erect in the society of men. With intense pathos he cried to God to send light to end his doubt and darkness; and when his passion of agony had somewhat spent itself, he prayed for us all in language so chaste, and with such earnest, ardent feeling, that his whole soul seemed melted into a liquid of yearning affection. According to his beliefs we are commanded to pray for the departed, and I think he fancies some dear friend now in the spirit-world is in hell suffering eternal damnation. If that be his idea, no wonder he is gloomy and sad; for if we take to reflecting on such a thought, it might well clothe the earth in sorrow, and turn humanity into a chaotic mass of wailing insanity. Before I was fully able to retire, Vance had ceased speaking, and I knew by the creaking of the bed that he had gone to rest. I silently withdrew, feel-

ing I had heard that which was intended only for God. And because I cannot comfort him, cannot tell him I know his secret, I am sad. Now you will surely regard him more favourably, and believe it is no selfish passion that animates me.'

Rosa looked more like a celestial spirit pleading for the lost, than a creature subject to disease and death and all the frailties of human life; and her aunt was so overcome with astonishment and concern, that she staggered to a seat gasping for breath, and muttering, 'God bless me! what next? what am I hearing? I think it is Hamlet who says he is a ghost himself, or carries one within his breast. Little did I ever think to live to hear of ghosts performing in my own house at dead of night. So, so; freethinking and dark, benighted papacy cannot face the solemn silence of night. Only what I expected, yet oh, what a sight!'

Mrs. Aslawn would have gone on denouncing the whole thing as a silly nightmare or a visiting punishment for profanity, as the sure evidence that God had withdrawn His presence and spirit from such daring downpullers of creeds and sacred traditions and time-honoured institutions; but Monsieur, the very man whose case they had been discussing, appeared on the scene calling for Rosa, as the carriage was waiting and the time up. No trace of deep sorrow was visible on his radiant countenance, but fresh and smiling as a June morning, he bowed low before the august lady, and cordially greeted her with true military dignity as he said he had come to bear her lovely niece away to the glory and freedom of a day in the country. What could it all mean? Monsieur's cheerful appearance added fresh mystery to his midnight anguish, and Rosa concluded she had actually been walking in her sleep, and wandering in the bewilderment of dreamland.

Emotion and bewilderment lent her beauty new charms and deeper tints of loveliness, and a noble passion lent intenser pathos to her eyes, and sympathy and sorrow made her countenance a volume of arousing eloquence. Vance was visibly struck with her appearance. For the first time he saw adoration in her every look, and, feeling his soul bent in adoring admiration, and his heart melted and drawn out of him by yearning tenderness, he caught her in his arms, and for a moment pressed her to his bosom, imprinting one hot kiss on her rosy lips. Drawing her arm into his, he again bent low before her aunt, and, kissing her hand, waved her an *au revoir*.

'Am I seeing and hearing earthly sights and sounds?' Mrs. Aslawn muttered as they disappeared; 'or am I mad, seeing and creating fantastical shapes and shadows? If I am sane and sober, I must be dreaming. Yet what is a dream? and whence do they come? Methinks our watching spirits, failing to arrest our attention in open day, draw out our lessons in strange metaphor; and when sordid desire is drowned in sleep, allure the soul to read its doom of joy or woe, or preach to it of its besetting sins, and show the brink of ruin. One thing, in dreams we see and hear that which defies the orthodox, and aids the visionary in his or her schemes. Like weary, wailing Job, there come times to all when we cry, O God! shall I live again? Now I am nearing the eternal day, and I am all quivering with these questions,

and as I question, heaven comes very near. Strange we really weary of earth, and need death to come to our help. I am wandering from the point. Rosa, child of my heart! I cannot leave you in sorrow. Merciful Father! how I love that erring child! Can it be she has been standing before me like a disembodied spirit, pleading for that pagan worshipper of images? Alas, alas! can it be that the tenderly-nursed daughter of General Anderson has been lying at dead of night on the hard floor listening to the profane cry of a deluded Papist, attempting to offer alms or sacrifice to God for the souls of the damned? Have I sat mute and dumb while the unholy, unhappy man pressed her to his lustful bosom, and tainted her chaste lips with his foul kiss? How circumstances seem hemming us in! Now that I am old and feeble, forsake me not, O God! Ever present Ruler of the destinies of mankind! avert disgrace from this house. Let no one-sided passion dim the beauty and meaning of her fair life. Rosa, dear lost Rosa! arise and trample on the head of the subtle tempter. Darling, beloved Rosa! I am mourning over you like an agonizing, dishonoured mother. Rosa! I live in your fresh joy, in your pure cheerfulness, ever like the bubbling music of virgin nature, and the bare idea of you living a sorrowful, blasted life will drive me mad. Better far that God cut you off by some sudden stroke than you live a living death. What is this I am dreading? I am fighting with a shadow, creating a tragedy, judging and dooming a human soul; yet I cannot shake it off, or deem this benumbing feeling of terror a mere fancy, for the very heavens above seem charged with deep, dark sorrow. Around me in every breath I inhale the canker-worm of some nameless disgrace. In my very blood I feel the coil of pain; the fibres of feeling are all frozen with the crawling sensation of mysterious dread; a deep, dull weight is laid across my breast, as of some weary head laid down to ebb out a blasted life, cut short by some impious sin. Every drop of my being is pulsating with some vague yet fearful sorrow. I see fixed eyes, and feel warm blood as dropping slowly from a riven heart, and strange, far-off, yet familiar sounds keep calling to me for help in the choking accents of the drowning. Rosa, is it you? What, O God, is the meaning of this strange experience? Rosa! come back, come close beside me to-day, for I feel I cannot be alone. Rosa! some evil is over thee! thou art lost! O God! my love, my all, is gone, and I spread out my empty arms to Thee, great Author of life. In heaven we shall all meet—no aching void, no empty chair, no absent guest, no maddening sorrow, no murdering suspense. Be calm and strong, weak, doubting heart, and do thy work, believing God will bring the wanderer home!





CHAPTER XXXII.

AN OLD LOVE.

WHEN Lord Moray parted with his wife at the Derby, he did intend being home to dinner before absenting himself on some business of his own. It was, however, evident he had lost—if he ever had much—all relish for Lady Augusta's society, and any trifling circumstance or unexpected turn-up led him away to follow change in the loose game of winning or losing. Reckless and almost destitute of principle, it could not be said the young lord had reached that stage of life and experience which leaves the man soured and seared, and dead to everything save selfish gratification. Nevertheless, he was anything but a happy, honourable man. His passions were fed by ardent impulses, and his weak will and lax morality, and familiar indulgence in most fashionable vices, rendered him at once an unlovely and dangerous character. However, he was not without his times of remorse, and moments of pious longing after something nobler, purer, and better; but all his goodness was mere passing emotion, and his life selfish, pampered, and self-willed, ever carrying out all his unbridled passions. Often he felt and bewailed the degradation of being the slave of unholy motives and desires, yet temptation both from within and without was more than a match for all his good intentions. His defeat was, however, in great part due to the fact that evil had gained the mastery before he had begun to regard it as evil, neither had he learned to believe that salvation from all sin is hard, severe warfare with self; that not one evil desire, or debasing habit, or impure wish, or selfish inclination will be overcome or resisted, save by ever-increasing, determined effort. He had yet to learn that man must hammer, hammer at his lower nature as earnestly and patiently as the sculptor chisels the marble statue into the perfection of his model; and that every individual who would rise into the higher life of freedom, must in reality work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. Another mistake or misfortune of Moray's was, that during most of his life he had been almost entirely left to his own will. In early childhood he was deprived of the softening and purifying influence and redeeming power of a mother's love; and like most pampered, imperfectly-trained youths, he knew nothing of resisting and overcoming the first approach of evil. Not until he had learned in the fearful school of sinful pleasure, did he know of or believe in a better

nature and a nobler life. He had drunk deep of what is called mere worldly pleasure ; we might be truer in naming it sensual pleasure. Not, however, more deeply than most of his companions with equal spare time and too much money. Nevertheless, something within him hungered and pined, and would not be satisfied with the mere husks of fleshly pleasure. Somewhere down among the rubbish he had divine capabilities hidden away, and his times of remorse and disgust whispered an immortal conscience of outraged original righteousness. Therefore, with all his wealth and social surroundings he was an unhappy wretch, adrift on the dead sea of sullen misanthropy and reckless indifference. Morally weak, petted, and self-willed, he drowned alike his remorse and longing for a purer life in strong drink, or lulled them to rest in the giddy whirl of gay society. At the time we introduce him to the reader as one related to some of our group of characters, and necessary to complete the links in our present series of events, we simply add that Moray was neither more nor less than a fast, reckless man of the period, a pure, practical atheist, with many splendid capabilities cast to the wind all through too weak yielding to temptation and want of moral courage to set his face against popular maxims. His marriage with one of Sir David's lovely daughters was one of those mistakes or blunders which happen too often in all grades of society, and which, in too many cases, prove absolute evils, blasting all the remaining life of the victimized pair. Both Moray and Lady Augusta had previously loved and been disappointed. In his case, he often loved, as he thought, for a few weeks or months, and when he found out it was but a passing fancy, he left his crushed victim as wantonly as the sporting bee quits the flower once it has fed on the honey.

When the said lord left the Derby, closely followed by Sir Charles' valet, he made for the city, and while doing some shopping business, he rather unexpectedly met old and esteemed friends of his departed parents. They had not met for long, and nothing would satisfy the venerable couple but his accepting of their kind invitation to dine, and have a chit-chat over old times, as well as on the winning horses of the Derby, the heavy stakes, etc. With all his faults, Moray was never weary hearing every little detail of his departed parents, and he was not backward in accepting the invitation. Another thing, the exalted couple had just returned from a three years' journey in foreign lands, and his lordship being of French descent, had special interest in all continental gossip. Moray's formal note to Lady Augusta was therefore true in the letter, if not in the spirit. We need scarcely say the evening was most agreeably spent. Perhaps in all the varying experiences of life, nothing can equal the joy of an evening spent with a few social, select friends, where the flow of beautiful conversation is as stimulating and refreshing to the inner spirit as the savoury viands and deep-red wine is strengthening to our physicalism. For once Moray was glad he so soon left the mad rabble of the racecourse ; and when he parted with his friends, he felt that his heart had indeed burned within him as he talked on ennobling themes. The night was yet young, but as he had other engagements, he gallantly made his *au revoirs*, mounted his steed, and set off at a brisk trot.

Darkness was fast shading the earth, and in the huge city, one by one, the lamps were being lighted; and like rows of twinkling stars, those from a distance gave some idea of the great ocean of crowding, bubbling life, drawn together by mutual affinities of enterprise, pleasure, achievement, renown, ambition, and giddy sensualism.

Moray trotted as far only as the first convenient hiring establishment, and giving his own horse in charge, he ordered a common cab, and in a whisper gave the driver the necessary directions.

'All right, my lord!' cabby cheerfully replied, pocketing the liberal fee. 'I knows the place well. Few cabbies don't know Silby Villa. The famed authoress gets plenty to go and have a bit look at her, and it's many a one I have driven there myself.'

Cabby must have been told to drive fast, for he used the whip unmercifully, and the poor, ill-used animal made the cab speed over the ground at a barbarous rate.

Rapidly, however, as they galloped along, Moray's feelings were more bounding; some absorbing passion or idea surged his entire soul, and his continual noting of time told of feverish impatience. It was evidently some last chance, some desperate attempt to gain an object or an end; and his inward emotion made great drops of cold sweat stand out on his forehead, and ever and anon he clasped his hands across his breast, as if to calm the wild beating of his heart. By and by, however, the machine drew up, and a long sigh of sinking relief or fear quivered convulsively in his bosom.

It was evident he had been expected. From one of the front windows a bright light shone, and the moment the cab drew up, a female face looked out from the side of the blind, and as speedily disappeared, and before he had either rung or knocked the door opened to admit him. Evidently it was a very dear friend who waited his late arrival, for in a moment he clasped a delicately-formed lady to his bosom, and embraced her with passionate fondness. In turn the beautiful woman threw her arms around his neck and kissed his cheek. Passionate ardour and respectful adoration were visible in his every look and act, but the lady proudly yet tenderly freed herself, and with graceful dignity bade him follow her. Beside a blazing fire—for the weather was yet cold and damp—and a comfortable table of chaste viands, the strange pair sat down, and every moment was filled in with sayings evidently of great interest to themselves. The room was neither dining nor drawing-room, but a combination of both—a sort of sanctum whose atmosphere was infinite comfort and sweetness, artistic taste, and calm repose. The lady's countenance, too, wore a serene expression of dignified composure, and her every feature seemed transformed with spiritual beauty. Deep sorrow she must have had before her face could thus reflect the chastened loveliness of a sanctified soul. Of a truth, she had experienced sorrow and suffering of no ordinary kind, but she had bravely overcome, and sat a crowned queen high above the pitiful changes and crushing experiences of life. The first flush of conversation over, and some refreshment having been partaken of, an imposing silence told of the serene joy pulsating their inner being. The lady's sharp yet pensive eyes were gazing into the

dancing flame, and through it far past into the silent world of human passions as they surge and ebb in the arena of the hidden soul, passions which are generally most strong and stirring when most silent. As was her wont, she had gone on philosophizing in thought on many unsolved questions, and was grappling reverently with the mystic mysteries of human life. Moray was so completely happy that love was framing a new language, and creating a modern Eden, only seeking continuity to complete his blessedness. For a time he watched the rapt reflectiveness of his fair companion with feelings of adoration so peculiarly holy and happy that he wished he could there and then annihilate everything and every circumstance of the past, and for ever remain worshipping the guiding star of his life.

Mrs. Sidney, or Senga, as Moray called her, was about the middle height, delicate-looking, and very slender in figure, and her golden-brown hair was beautifully silverized, and was arranged loosely round her nobly-formed head. A small widow cap sat on the top of her particularly high forehead, and her perfect figure was neatly dressed in plain black. She wore a cheerful, nay, almost playful expression, and was superabundant in jest and humour. Nevertheless, a close observer could discover a deep stratum of grave sadness as the leading feature her inner soul. She appeared on the shady side of thirty, yet her appearance and manner were perfectly youthful, and when necessary, commanding dignity, or a few flashing sentences of her refined, matured wisdom, told of a full-developed womanhood. Believing, as she did, in the soul's continual progression towards perennial youth, the very belief lent youthfulness alike to her body and mind. Although she had faultless features of a classic type, eloquent eyes of deepest blue, and a winning, versatile manner, her special charms, and her greatest powers of attraction, were her tender soul of yearning sympathy, and her able and charitable defence alike of truth and those who had fallen into sin. In a word, hers was a beauty which increases rather than diminishes with increase of years, and ripens into bloom amid the decay of nature. The animations of her great soul sublimated her physical beauty with the emitting splendour of a progressive spirit, feeding on the inflowing influence of the infinite, and living in loving union with truth, ever rising nearer and nearer to the perfect and absolute.

'Senga, I think that deep stratum of pensive sadness underlying your playful cheerfulness is the evergreen bloom and celestial aroma lending you a sort of supernatural attraction,' Lord Moray remarked. 'Do you know, I often wonder at the strange, mysterious power you exercise over me? Of course, those who are strangers to your peculiar powers of mind and heart would regard such a saying as mere profuse bosh, the old story of all soft, impassioned lovers. To me, however, it is a sacred, peculiar joy, the very fact of knowing you, even if you feel forced to deny me the one aim and desire of my life. To-night the spell of your influence has returned with redoubled force, and I feel as if I could for ever sit at your feet, looking into your lovely eyes, all deep and shining with infinite thought, like the ever-receding canopy of space, telling of a fount of enjoyment when mere passion has exhausted its energy, and of food and rest to the wearied spirit, and of activity and

immortality to the quenchless aspirations of the soul. Therefore, as I gaze into these quick-moving, far-seeing orbs, I try to trace some faint outline of the nature and extent of the thoughts of your ever-busy brain. In your presence I think, talk, and feel a rational interest in all the affairs of mankind; and although I am both a born aristocrat and fool, I feel it right and proper that every man and woman should have a fair opportunity of being learned and in a good social position. Yet it is not I, but you in me who thus thinks and feels. Are you hearing me, Senga? For ever so long I have been expecting you to turn from the dancing flame, and appear as if you were conscious of my presence. On the contrary, however, you keep stedfastly watching the wasting fuel, and I suppose you are solving some hard question on the hateful mystery of decay and death. I fancy you are witnessing this universe burned up, not suddenly, by God's special mandate, but slowly and surely, by steam and gas and the myriad agencies of man's inventions. Do you know, Senga, I often think your proud heart would break, and unseen bleed itself to death rather than seek one word of sympathy from a frail human being.'

'You are perfectly right in concluding I seldom seek sympathy,' she remarked; 'not, however, because I do not believe in such a power, but simply because I find every one sick for the same infallible remedy; and not because I am such a supreme fool as suppose myself superior to or indifferent about such a miracle-working influence. When all are affected with the same disease, or overcome of the same weariness, the most heroic and strong-minded and most self-denying must cast off the benumbing nightmare, and by sheer force of soul heal themselves and others. Thus, when I find my brethren and the world at large more wearied and sad, or, at least, evidently less able to overcome, I muster the latent forces of my over-soul, and find as our day so shall our strength be; ever realizing the truth of the proverb, that "God helps those most who help themselves." Another reason which makes me avoid soliciting sympathy is, that I find the ideas and opinions of mankind in general, and the customs and manners of modern society in particular, so entirely opposed to mine and my notions of sociality, that we have little in common; and I need not tell you that without some affinity of soul and heart there can be no real sympathy. Therefore, the only thing for me is to do my work of writing and speaking as God has instructed me, allowing the opinion of the world in no way to interfere with what I consider my mission. If society be against me, and refuse to believe my gospel, that is its business, not mine. The one thing of importance to every individual is, that he or she do as conscience suggests, and work bravely at the work Heaven has set before them, even if it bring nothing but a cross of suffering and defeat in death. You have again and again adverted to my knowledge of the human heart, and wondered by what power I can so read the mystic pages of the unseen soul; but you might wonder more at the surpassingly strange fact of love, hate, revenge, generosity, uncleanness, and faint aspiration after holiness, all dwelling in conflicting contrast within one solitary soul. However, I cannot find any figure or form of language which will convey to you anything like a true idea of how the

spirit that is within can read the secrets of another spirit, save by saying pathos and sympathy are the vital principles or powers. Possessed of true pathos and sympathy, we can play on the ten thousand strings of the human soul as the master musician on the notes of harmony. Of course, only very few possess this mystic power, simply because few care to cultivate so much acquaintance with self and the hidden springs of human feeling more or less common to all. It is Goethe, I think, who has said he found within himself all the possibilities of the incarnate fiend, as well as of the sage, refined philosopher, and adoring saint. At first reading such a statement appears monstrous, but on reflection we find it contains more truth than imaginative error. In other words, the powers or faculties which lead to great renown, and by which some achieve immense good, and form for themselves immortal characters of divine excellence, if devoted to evil would most assuredly work as immense mischief, both individually and socially. You will, therefore, see the only difference between the hero of good and that of evil is simply a matter of will and choice. We are entering, however, into deep water, viz. into the great problem of good and evil; and seeing it would require hours to discuss such a subject, we must retrace our wandering—that is, unless you are in a mood for moralizing.

‘I am inclined for anything so long as it has your countenance and able attention,’ he replied. ‘Now I can understand it is not pride or lofty superiority, but superabundance of self-denial and generosity which move you to forego seeking sympathy or laying bare the inner, sacred longings of your soul. Would I could be your constant companion, so that I might spend every moment of life seeking whereby to aid you, or in any way be a source of comfort or amusement to you. I am not so sure, however, if I rightly understand you in regard to all the possibilities of evil as well as good being embedded in one individual soul. Nevertheless, I do see some rays of reasonableness in the saying. Nay, as I begin to shape argument to overthrow such a conclusion, I see more and more of truth therein. Further, the very fact that I have committed so many errors and immoralities, is an earnest that I could still further descend in barbarism and sensualism. However, while I have so given way and added to the sum of our national vices, I must admit I felt it possible to refrain, and often yearned for the peace and joy of an innocent life. Reflecting on such awful possibilities, one can understand how a leading statesman or king can become a very fiend in iron oppression, bloodshed, and selfish ambition, by simply allowing selfish, unholy passions to gain the victory and keep the lead. In regard to pathos and sympathy being the key to open all hearts, I must admit ignorance. It is knowledge too high for me. Before I am done with life, I may know more of pure, holy affinities, of the wonderful spirit-power which seems to make you almost akin to God. Reasoning from a pure rational side, you must admit no two have equal powers of pathos and sympathy, any more than equal powers to achieve great conquests in art, science, or philosophy. Again, some are born with such a fever of evil in their constitution that certain vices and crimes are comparatively easy, and whose spiritual instincts or powers are so dull and dormant that goodness appears to them

something severe and supernatural. On the other hand, some come into life almost as pure and spiritual as if fresh from the inner life of God, with natures all awake to the good and beautiful, and with but feeble inclination to evil. How hard a life of innocence must be to the former, and how unjust the laws which make no distinction in punishment! In the one case, the incarnate fiend is easy, and the Christ image a bloody struggle with flesh and spirit. In the other, some powerful temptations must again and again beat against the most frail side of humanity before the man or woman with most of good can fall. Some extreme orthodox believers refuse to believe in any innate goodness in the human soul. But to the honour of our race be it said, I have found men and women, youths and maidens, whose goodness I have thanked God for even after I had been rascal enough to ply all my cunning wiles to tempt them into sin. May it not, therefore, be that these men and women could never become possibilities of huge evil, or, in other words, could never find within their nature sufficient possibilities of evil to make great sinners?

'It appears to me we are both right,' she said. 'All history and experience proves the fact, that many are born with constitutions overrun or steeped in sensualism and all the various forms of selfishness, and that there are many men and women who are naturally so pure and noble in all their desires and thoughts, that no evil passion would be allowed to rule for a single hour. Nevertheless, the idea of the German writer still holds its own, but is so deep and subtle that we are apt to overlook its real truth. No man more than Goethe was touchingly alive to the innate graces of our common nature, and none more eloquent in the cause of goodness. But the very fact that evil or want of holiness can find an entrance for one moment into the mental and moral powers and passions of those naturally inclined to virtue, is a sufficient indication that strength of temptation, or a passive indifference to active progressive goodness, might launch these into active and deliberate commission of evil. However, I am inclined to think every victory of evil, alike in the naturally virtuous and naturally vicious, slowly but surely overcomes and deadens the power of evil, and that it is perfectly possible for us down here, amid the din and confusion of good and evil, to live before God without rebuke.'

'It may be; but among the class I move in, I can tell you, I see no dominant power save evil,' he replied. 'The truth is, club life is so rotten and hollow, I wonder the world holds on; and I am such a crawling dust-eater that I only know I am panting, like a restrained steed, for the joy and liberty to call you mine. In your last favour, however, you very frankly told me you will for ever continue to oppose all my cherished desires, nay, you even forbade this visit which I have thrust upon you. Perhaps it is different with your sex, but I know most men require some pure earthly influence to complete their life and draw them from good to better. With me it is emphatically true. It may be insane weakness, but I must have some pure or impure woman to save or damn me. Only you can do the former; and I honestly confess I do not understand, and never wish to understand, the cool, intellectual love which can analyze its own feelings and capabilities, and which

prudently respects the order and opinions of society as if these were in harmony with the absolute laws of right and purity. Whatever you may think, I have found society to be a rotten, hypocritical tissue of falsehood and pretension.'

'I believe there is enough and to spare of falsehood and fraud in society,' Mrs. Sidney replied, 'but that in no way takes from our responsibility to be correct and to do justly. In short, your unwillingness to make your unhappy marriage educational correction or discipline, and your total want of will or ability to sympathize with my devotion to duty, is the cause of all our discord. Could you be reasonable, and subject a selfish craving for present gratification to the ennobling influence of spiritual reciprocity, we might enjoy all the blessedness of a stimulating friendship, and revel in a love far more enduring than mere sexual passion. You are, however, right when you say most men need the refining influence of a noble woman, and yet, even in these advanced times, a great many most ignorantly oppose almost all measures for the emancipation of women from every form of evil and oppression. Now that you have thrust this meeting upon me, I once again tell you to pause before you subject your wife to more temptation. Remember no one can shake off duty, however unpleasant, with impunity. Augusta is young, and has been gay brought up, and her temperament and inclinations are all high-set and impulsive; and seeing you have not been all you might be to her, why expect from her more than you are giving?'

'Have you no pity, Senga, that you continue, every time we meet, darting burning bars of reproach into my aching heart?' he exclaimed, starting to his feet, and the swollen veins on his forehead told something of the strength and nature of his gathering passion. 'If you have no advice, no encouragement, no hope, nothing but cutting correction, I will retire and feed on the cancer-poison of my secret sorrow. You may write and preach as you like, all over life is a miserable farce not worth living.'

'Very well, farce let it be,' she said; 'only it is a pity there is so much real tragedy running all through and through the amusing drama.'

'The truth is, I'm a fool and complete farce in myself, I suppose,' he replied, 'and fancy life must be the same to all. One thing I know, that let you whip and scorch me as you please, you never lose your wonderful power over me. Senga, I could die at your feet; yet every word you write or speak stabs me to the heart. Without your companionship, wealth and position are only dull, insipid weariness.'

'You keep on heaping up charges against me as if I was your mortal enemy,' she replied. 'If you had any intelligent understanding of the war between principle and passion, duty and inclination, you would know that if I feel compelled to wound you, I also wound myself. In seeking this meeting, you desired my candid advice; but when the heart and will are set on a particular line of conduct or action, the very best advice is cast to the wind. To be my constant companion now would involve no sacrifice; on the contrary, it would be an honour. Would, however, you had thus thought and felt at a time when it would indeed have been sacrifice on your part to acknowledge and befriend a struggling

maiden, battling with poverty and a great God-given message! Would, I say, you had then venerated and respected me with manly heroism and honourable fidelity! Would you had, in the days which are for ever past, valued a love which enshrined you like some holy idol, and which, when insulted, found it hard denying all which remained to bear me through!

'In mercy spare me!' he exclaimed. 'Is the dead past for ever present to your sensitive, suffering heart? Stop, for Heaven's sake, stop! for your words are driving me mad. Yet it is better I should see the extent of my sin, and feel the full weight of its punishment. Ah me! the sins of my youth are ever before me. Why can men so make a mock of virtue? It is the cursed, mawkish humbug of modern Christianity that's to blame. I never remember hearing a real, outright sermon preached at the besetting sins of modern society; and I honestly tell you, I was led to believe it was simply manly to follow the crowd who spend night after night in every form of sensual debauch. It may seem a fearful thing to such as you who have grown up pure as the mountain dew, nevertheless I was taught to believe I was only half a man before I could drink, swear, and seduce a girl. Now, however, if I could redeem my sex from the damning delusion, I would retire to some lonely cave, and spend the rest of my days sweating drops of blood, and agonizing in penitence over the past. With you I could rise slowly toward the noble and pure, and attain to full freedom from all enslaving evil. If for love the world is well lost,—if, as you say, you once loved me so fondly, my devotion will soon rekindle the flame. You may have chosen a noble part, but it is a hard life. To me it appears mad folly for one such as you, so full of sociality, love, and beauty, with such exquisite tastes for art and all the poetic beauty of wealth, and especially with your sublime appreciation of nature, to be content to plod on at the drudgery of pen-work, digging out rich thought and holy feeling to be cut and twisted by milk-and-water critics. We certainly are in name a Christian nation, but it is the golden calf of mammon, all the same, that we bow before in lowly prostration; and if Jesus was to return, as some think, I can tell you He will have greatly changed in doctrine and character if He could either get a seat in Parliament or the privilege of a Presbyterian pulpit. Of course the Unitarian theologians on the one hand, and the social reformers on the other, would at once take Him into their arms, and, as in the old times, He would simply have a mere handful of followers.'

'You are not the first who has told me my devotion to duty and loyalty to conscience is insane foolishness,' she said. 'However, if society be one-sided in its criticism, that can in no way take from the truth or merit of my work, and I tell you, the more I am condemned or opposed, I will all the more determinedly go on my way. It is an easy matter echoing the popular cry, or swimming with the tide; and literature, like religion and politics, has always had its great reformers or high priests, testifying to the people that genius is ever far in advance of schools and colleges; and even if it but stutter and stammer, it comes with a *live coal* from the altar of divine inspiration. It appears to me

the work of the true teacher is not so much to please and embellish, as to arouse and stir. Therefore, when you advise me to seek ease and luxury instead of adhering to noble work, you evidently wish me to add to the aggregate of the evils you condemn. If the ruling spirit of society be narrow, selfish, and insincere, it has all the more need to be liberalized, and made more honest and generous. In trade, commerce, law, medicine, architecture, painting, music, and every home industry, it is the supreme duty of every one to push all to the utmost perfection, and to positively refuse to abide by any attained excellence or fixed mode or principle of action. Such being my opinion, you may be sure I will abide by work, even if I only receive as wages the cross and a stone instead of bread. Even in this life there might be worse than hard discipline, therefore I will not tear my hair or stamp and rage, but, as Charlotte Brontë advises, simply close my teeth on the stone, and learn to endure hardness as a true soldier.'

Lord Moray's pale face grew a shade more deathlike, and a long sigh seemed to indicate that all life and hope had receded from his sinking heart.

'I now feel I am powerless to change your awfully earnest determination,' he gasped, and his voice was changed and grating, as if the very sorrow and disappointment had cut and slashed into the very organs of his physicalism. 'Your choice makes me shudder, for the very idea of such prospective sacrifice makes my poor faint heart sink within me. As you went on, I listened for some ray of hope, some faint encouragement, some indication that I was of some importance; but I am but a straw or bubble, and all within me is mad revolt, a very chaos of misery. Down, down I will plunge in a desperate chase after carnal pleasure, and when I am completely disgusted, soured, and incapable of feeding the festering lusts of the flesh, I will smash into the slimy cave of self-destruction, and rid me of my iniquity. O merciful God! woman, vain, foolish, ignorant, and weak, is a curse, a blot, which man, in his headlong selfishness, paints a deeper hue, and drags into a fouler mire; but woman enlightened, tender, noble, sacrificing, and heroic in goodness, is Thy best and most redeeming gift, a healthful influence banishing all curses from earth. Alas! too late, too late have I learned this divine truth,—the one truth if a man know and respect, which will lead him to self-honour and inward blessedness. Merciful heaven! even in my desperate despair and mad rebellion at fate, I acknowledge the justness of my punishment, and feel the beneficent *source* of all beauty has special regard for female excellence; and that it were better a mill-stone was round a man's neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should, serpent-like, entice one of these to sin. Best of women! my punishment is more than I can endure; and bear with me when I tell you I cannot live apart from you. By night and by day, I pine and yearn for you until my life is dry and withered. Even to-day, from the mirth and excitement of the Derby I had to gallop away. In all the gay crowd I could see nothing like your haunting face, and the bubbling scene of men's foolishness became madness and death. Therefore, oh recall your vows, and live for me alone! To me write moral essays, love sonnets, prayers and hymns, and refuse longer to

waste your sweetness on a world which sneers at all earnest enthusiasm.'

'It is now my turn to bid you stop,' she remarked, 'for you are simply breaking my heart. This is a fearful ordeal; and I must still say I cannot shape anything like comforting replies to your strong sayings. You have uttered sayings which tell me you are now alive to the realities of the higher life, that you now know yourself and your need, and these sayings have steeped my soul in sorrow far too real and acute for expression. When two souls in intense earnestness for different purposes meet and clash, it is a fearful war, cutting to the very core of feeling; and the unconquered spirit, even when capable of nought save suffering, stands out in lonely agony, revealing, it may be for the first time, the sublime fact of its innate immortality, and the latent infinitude of the resources of the human soul in its capacities and capabilities to dare and do. If you would only reflect, I am sure you will find it is mere blind folly to expect so much from any one human individual, that it is rank infatuation to dream of resting all hopes of earthly happiness, as well as preparation for a higher state of being, on any time-formed connection. There are depths of tenderness in every human soul, as well as times of sorrow and infinite yearnings, which only the Great Spirit can understand, and to allow any passion or fixed idea to be greater than devotion to the highest conceivable good is hurtful weakness. If you would only be reasonable, you will find man's nature so many-sided and complex and capricious, that no single passion can fill up the total of his being. Further, think on the mere frailty and uncertainty of earthly life. In a day one breath of fell disease might in a few hours wither your fair idol, and in a few more the corruption of death would compel you to be grateful to the grave for hiding the ghastly object from your eyes. Let us therefore be mutually patient, reasonable, heroic, and self-denying. Time is but a fleeting pulse of educating experience; this planet is but the nursery of souls destined to excursion for ever among the immensities of God's vast creations; and in a higher state of being we may be constant companions. As I have often said, there are other aims and objects in life, as well as other and higher powers and faculties in our nature, than mere sexual endearment; and if it be for the good of many that we deny ourselves the dearest wishes of mutual inclination, in after years the sweet awards of conscience will more than compensate. However, although I thus argue and advise, I do not regard sexual endearment, with its many and indefinable joys, and sad, sweet anxieties, and its sanctifying sorrows, of small importance, as mere passing emotions, perishable amid the decay of physical disorganization. On the contrary, I believe men and women are sanctified and purified of selfishness and many other evils by the noble performance of fatherly and motherly duties. However, we can be sanctified in a higher sense by devotion to truth, by the submissive and heroic bearing of many heavy crosses, and especially by a life devoted to the cause of humanity. Another thing, sexual love is such a strong passion or instinct in the human soul, that it rather requires subjection or purifying than increase of cultivation and attention; and knowing that its first, and I might say

last, aim and strong desire are self-pleasure, self-comfort, and self-interest, I think most fiction writers do immense mischief in for ever placing sexual love and the constant and madly-passionate pursuit of its pleasures as the framework of all their works. You will therefore see that, however much I may long for the endearment of mutual love, I have determined to obey the voice of inspiration. Such being the case, let me plead with you to forego your present infatuation, and help me by sympathy to climb the rugged heights of duty. If absent physically, my hovering spirit will entwine you, lending strength and inspiring heroism, and tenderly whispering of a resurrection morn, when the sun of our joy will rise never to go down.'

'Noble, generous Senga!' he exclaimed, falling at her feet, 'you are far too good and great for this selfish, money-hunting age. The times are too sordid, shallow, and cynical for understanding and appreciating such devotion to the highest. You speak sublimely of sacrifice, but I tell you honestly, I must have been born with some moral insanity or intense desire for the selfish and sensual. When you discourse heroically on duty, and speak of communion with pure spirits, nay, of actually walking and talking with God, I feel it possible to be good and do good, but the moment I am alone, or away among the scrambling ambition of fashion and frivolity, I have no power or will to resist temptation. Therefore to speak of me foregoing the burning bent of my yearning passion is mere waste of words. I cannot do the impossible. If man be a free agent, I am, alas! only free to sin. Oh, wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this power of moral impotency? You evidently have realized immortality a fact beyond dispute, and have so stirred up the latent good within you, that evil devils run from you as they did from Christ; but to me, time is everything. The present moment I must plunge after my darling desires, or life is not worth living. A resurrection morning, with spiritual glory, and the blessedness of disembodied souls, is too vague, visionary mysticism for me. Still, when I am beside you, I have not a desire contrary to your will; you simply mould me like the clay in the hands of the sculptor. Perhaps you will say these are spiritual affinities, latent capabilities that I should cultivate; but I simply know that it is my love for you, and that love, pure, single, devoted, alone can save me. I love you with a mad, devouring passion, and must for ever have your actual presence, or I lose all moral order and honesty, and will whirl into the rapids of more reckless dissipation. Somehow I cannot believe you are in earnest. In mercy, Senga, put your arms, love, around me, and say I am dearer far than fame, sweeter than the enthusiasm which late and early lights your lamp of devotion, and lends you endurance to wear out your energies for a generation who will put you to death as a mad theorizer and profane teacher of false doctrine.'

'Rise, dear George, and let us, if it be possible, come to some intelligent understanding,' she said, and her heart seemed sinking within her. 'While you are the husband of Augusta Haddington, we can only be friends. I feel I love you very much, that the old spell of your power can yet affect me. Ah! I feel you are yet dear to me,—how dear, only He who formed the heart can know,—and while conscious life pulsates

in me, I will continue to think fondly of you. Your half-sweet, half-sad smile is like beaming sunshine, and your presence is ever a sort of completeness, fragrant as the calm of holy meditation ; and I also feel you love me very dearly, and that consciousness brings a blessed composure, and such a sweet confidence helps me to perform duty ; for duty we must and shall respect, even if its crosses and cares bring nothing but sorrow and suffering.'

Tears ran from her lovely eyes, and her head bent low on the kneeling lord, and her lips touched his proud, arching neck.

'This is misery, blank and complete, Senga,' he said, springing to his feet, and making for the door. 'Seeing you are thus fixed and determined, I am doomed, and dare not linger another moment. The very touch of your gentle kiss is coursing through my blood, until it is burning my soul with yearning madness. Would I could tear my love for you out of my heart, and trample it under my feet as one can some tormenting relic of a past memory ! Why are we so formed that one individual can make our life at will a heaven or hell ? It is unjust man is not free, but rather a mocking mystery, surrounded by influences which sway him at will, as do the wind the forest trees. Good-bye, holiest memory and most agonizing sorrow ! Would my misery could crush out life ! but despair and death cannot add one torment to my pain, and with mocking derision leave the miserable to their fate.'

'Where are you going ?' she cried, moving after him. 'Stay, and let us part like rational beings. Surely you are mad !'

'Yes, you are right, I am clean mad ; and all women, even the most enlightened and pure, are selfish and cold. They only love to awake love, or rather seem to love ; and when a man is ensnared, enchained, spell-bound, a poor, drudging slave, they cast him off as an unbearable fool, or dangerous madman,' he hissed, and by this time his hand was on the front door, and his fixed, determined expression told he had made up his mind to do and dare everything, rather than listen to reason or combat darling inclinations.

'Hear me,' she continued, 'when I still pray of you to pause and listen to reason and common sense. It has come on a fearful night ; I hear the rain pelting against the window, and the weird, wild wind is howling like enraged demons. Therefore, I pray, turn in. The night is dark, the distance long, and fever or death may follow such rash imprudence. Come back and lodge for the night, if not as a friend, as a wayfaring man, and in the calm of morning you will see things differently, and we will part mutual, helping friends.'

'Beloved, you plead in vain,' he replied. 'You are determined on your line of conduct, so am I in mine. Mad indeed I am ; but my madness is as powerful and sustaining as your logical sanity. I am so possessed with love-madness, that I dare not stay ; and for Heaven's sake cease that soft pleading. Again, good-bye, and may the good Being you believe in bless you still more and more. Think nothing of me. I am utterly unworthy of you, and the wild fury of the enraged elements will beat in harmony with the feverish passion of my corroding heart. It is well the rain falls so profusely, as the soft waters of heaven may tend to damp my burning fury, and wash away the impious curses I am

hurling at remorseless fate, which, like an abyssmal deep, is rolling between us.'

As if courting disease, the wretched lord opened his overcoat to allow the drifting rain to beat direct against his troubled breast, and with furious haste he moved onward, hardly knowing or caring whither he went. Either by instinct or desire for repose, he reached home in the early morning, foot-sore and exhausted. Then he learned Lady Moray had eloped with Captain Geddes, and his unexpected freedom made him sane and sober. At first he hardly knew whether he was glad or sad. One thing, it was a sudden blow which made him reflect, and retiring to his bedroom, he fastened the door, and throwing himself across the bed, wept and sobbed like a lost, wearied child far from home and yearning for peace and rest.

After Moray ceased speaking, Mrs. Sidney stood for some time on the doorstep listening to his retreating foot-falls, and his desperate wretchedness seemed taking possession of her sensitive heart. When the faintest sound died away, she turned in, fastened the door, and slowly returned to her room. She was faint, wearied, and awfully sad, and sinking on a chair, she folded her hands and gazed inwardly on the bubbling mystery of human experience; and while she sat lost in deep thought, she appeared like a mute statue of sublime endurance. No tears rained from her fixed eyes, yet the feelings of her heart were then mighty above reason, and all learning and philosophy, even judgment, was stunned and suspended; but she submitted to all the experiences of her life, and no weak complaint escaped from her compressed lips as she silently endured the aching pain of a heart furrowed through and through with all imaginable sorrow. For hours she sat a mute, motionless figure, watching the splashing, slashing waves of sorrow and suffering, rising and falling in her inner soul. However, in her serene dignity she was far above the jarring confusion of time, far above all selfish conflict with human weakness, but she suffered because of suffering and sorrow, and struggled in soul to plan escapes for the ignorant and oppressed. By and by the mystic ray of breaking morning made her start and realize that time, the incessant beat of God's infinite life, had been moving onward; and before undressing, in low, pathetic tones she said, 'Father in heaven! Thou never leavest nor forsakest, and I am called anew to energy and enterprise by the realized sublimity of Thy unwearied, unchanging activity. Holy God! for this fresh morning, which so plainly tells Thou art ever at the helm of creation, steering the infinite machinery of all planetary evolutions, I offer Thee my adoring and wondering thanks. Inspire me afresh this new day to do some noble act for the comfort and redeeming of the people. Now I realize more and more that Thou teachest Thy children wisdom and understanding by the immediate inspiration of Thy Spirit, and I am trying more and more to comprehend Thy messages, so that I may apply them aright. In the quiet of solitude, and when our cup of earthly prosperity is full, it is easy conversing with angels, and dreaming of blessedness. But, alas! when the complexity of human ignorance, and the sweeping yearnings of human love, and the hot pressure of human weakness, and the hotter anguish of suffering and misery, defeat and disappointment, all roll over the

quivering spirit, we cry we are forsaken ; and to know Thy law and love, and the way to peace and righteousness, is hard, confusing work. To believe and obey where we cannot understand, and to trust and love while anguish of spirit maketh us weary of life, is no easy task. Still I bow my will, and out of the agony of suffering rise nearer to Thee. Would I could drain George Moray's heart of its wretched despair ! Would I could impart to him my endurance, my inspiration, my hope, and my trust ! What to me is fame, the glitter of renown, or the luxury of wealth ? All these appear to me mere possessing forms of madness ; but I dwell alone with my genius, and my inspiration is the mystic thrill of indefinable blessedness which is my immortal life. Fame and the awards of patronizing society can give me nothing ; but I am constrained to bear witness to the innate grandeur of the human soul, of its inherent immortality, and ability to shake off all its curses, and rise up toward the peace and perfection of God ; and I live and labour to bring into society the glory of the heavens, the mystic beauty and beneficence of earth, and the diviner glory and beauty of noble, blameless lives. It is no business of mine if I am sneered at, despised, or reproached ; the spirit of inspiration is within me, and I must obey the voice. Ah ! holy, mystic Spirit, I am full of yearning to raise humanity up out of the bondage of evil ; and it may be, when I am far from earth, still joying in thee, that some will believe in my gospel and follow after goodness. When increase of enlightenment has chased away superstition, and the charity which hopeth all things has cradled the mad anarchy of sectarian bigotry, mankind will more and more believe in my message, and realize that all true redeemers and reformers came out from God. Then the lonely student will realize me a living friend, all instinct with his own burning desires, and my testimony will stimulate his flame of waning zeal ; the misunderstood truth revealer, as he cuts out direct roads to glory and honour, to God and life, will discover I am working with him, waiting with a lap full of roses and lilies to regale his senses, and with a live coal from the altar of inspiration to reanimate his enthusiasm and inspire with new zeal ; the ardent, adoring lover will find me his or her companion and sympathetic adviser, answering back the mysterious emotions quivering within the mystic recesses of feeling, sublimating the rapt experiences of the inexpressible yearnings which vitalize the fond kiss binding two spirits in the blessed union of kindred oneness ; the weary and exceedingly sorrowful will clasp me as a welcome familiar friend, revealing death as the birth-pangs of resurrection glory. Again for this new day I thank Thee, Holy Father ; and do Thou inspire me more and more to live and teach the sinless life of Jesus, for our Christianity is covered over with sectarian fanaticism and doctrinal delusions, and our earth is rent and torn with selfishness and godless pharisaism. Society all over the face of the earth is pining and heartsore for love and light, for sympathy and generosity. Holy inspirer of all Thy listening children, send light and love, so that society may shake off its winter of sectarian pharisaism, soulless doctrine, political oppression, and individual selfishness, and come forth to the resurrection of life, to the everlasting summer of reverent faith and active love.'



CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE FIRST PART OF THE PICNIC.

BY some not very artistic arrangement, the most unlikely parties were joined. At least so thought the moody, miserable French general, when he and Hamilton were coupled with the younger Misses Haddington, and set off in the first carriage. In the second was Major Wray, Earl F—, and a few more elderly ladies and gentlemen, some of whom had been introduced to each other for the first time. The elder Misses Clayton were, however, beside the Major and Earl, and added infinitely to the beauty, handsomeness, and intelligence of the second carriage. The third was occupied by papas and mammas, and other spare gentlemen, who talked fluently on all the season parties, and leading social and political gossip of the London clubs. The ladies, too, seemed to be members of some secret or select societies, and their evident relish for all gambling news, and especially their answers and inquiries, told they were up to all tactics and terms of these places of excitement and lawless gain. Thus the more we penetrate into the heart of fashionable society, we realize that the only difference between many of these and the squalid masses of immoral men and women who swarm in the crowded by-lanes of all large towns, is simply mere physicalism. What the one does in rags and dirty, smoky tap-rooms and hovels, the other does in satins, broad cloth, and elegant saloons. On that day, however, the principal item of gossip in the third carriage was the approaching marriage of Earl Fairly and Miss B. Haddington, and some curious speculation as to whether Major Wray or the French general was the accepted betrothed of Rosa. Soon after the Haddington party, Earl F— proposed and was accepted by the youngest Miss Haddington; and her lady mother, still set on scheming and plotting for her other unmarried daughters, was hoping Rosa had not succeeded in enslaving the wealthy French general. The Major was of good family, and a Tory, but he was poor, and Monsieur's money covered a multitude of his faults and failings. Such being Lady Haddington's mind, no wonder Monsieur and Hamilton were set off with her two charming daughters. The first carriage had got considerably in advance of the other two, and Monsieur ordered the driver to move slow, so that, if possible, he might catch the echo of Rosa's voice. He had been hearing flying reports of the Major as a likely man to win her romantic

affection, and the very fact that they were both in one carriage rendered his centre of feeling a chaotic mass of burning jealousy. Do as he might, all save her image lost attraction, and casting aside the perfect gallantry so natural to him, he entirely forgot he was beside high-born ladies, and became lost in sullen abstraction. Hamilton, knowing his moody tendency, and having a suspicion that his fair cousin had stolen Monsieur's heart, began exercising all his ingenuity to divert the attention of the ladies. Disappointment, disgust, or annoyance was, however, too apparent in Monsieur for disguising, and the Misses Haddington set to questioning him closely. At a loss to comprehend his vague replies, the eldest of the two, rather ironically, regretted that he was so unwell, and suggested that they draw up at the first village and have the advice of the resident medical doctor. Just as the withering irony was entering Monsieur's sensitive soul, the echo of Rosa's silvery laugh floated on the fragrant autumn breeze, and cold drops of perspiration stood out on the General's forehead, and spasms of mental distress rendered his inner being a liquid of boiling agony. Then he realized that the most harassing and hot campaign of war was nothing compared to the more trying war of the flesh and spirit. He wished to act and feel nobly, but weak, unmanly jealousy rankled and tore within, and he sank back in the carriage, weak and faint, slain by the monster of unconquered evil. Then Miss Haddington felt he was really ill, and repenting of her indifference, she began showering on him all manner of sympathy. Sweet, soothing words and real interest made hot blushes of shame mantle his wan cheeks, and the delighted lady hailed them as a welcome evidence of tenderness toward herself. With an effort, however, Monsieur shook off his selfish abstraction, and determined to make the most of the day.

'Ah, *mon cher ami*, I am indeed pleased to see smiles lighting up your handsome countenance,' she said, wafting the subtle perfume of her delicate pink fan over his reanimated face. Now I can see the first faint ray of social sunshine, and expect we will have a glorious day—a day some of us will remember as the birthday of a life of blessedness. Mamma tells me you are the very soul of company—one of those men who seem to unite within them the magic powers which can touch all hearts, and make the grave and gay alike vibrate with kindred emotions. Every party you grace with your presence you become the lion. Such being the case, I am all expectation.'

'*Chère mademoiselle, vous êtes extrêmement bonne, et je vous remercie,*' Monsieur graciously replied. 'It may be, however, that you English, *malgré* your cool proclivities, are sometimes apt to be carried away by emotion, or, it may be, mere bombastic sophistry. Therefore, passing your high-flown compliments aside, I am, at present, far from being the right man in the right place. This, you must remember, is my first English picnic, and I am simply gathering, bit by bit, an idea of your social manners and modes of enjoyment. However, I admit that pure, natural enjoyment cannot be entirely awkward to any individual with a degree of civilization and education. Nevertheless, before I am complete master of your phraseology, customs, games, etc., I must be allowed to listen and admire more than talk and amuse. Had we

been driving to-day in the neighbourhood of Paris, or any other French town, I certainly would have been the general. As it is, I am simply one of the ranks, willing to be drilled into order by biting irony, or led by indulgent compassion. The truth is, I must be like the wise philosopher, in the present circumstances, by keeping my eyes open and my mouth shut.'

'I at once grant it would be very impolite to exact too much from a stranger,' she replied. 'However, when every word that stranger utters convinces us more and more that he is our superior in experience and all other classic advantages, I think we might be pardoned for expecting some display of generalship. The truth is, Monsieur, you are so familiar with our wit and love phraseology, that I am inclined to think you have at some period of your life courted a Scotch lady. Excuse my presumption, but from the first I have been struck with the amount of pure Scotch sayings you can command; and I heard papa remark that you had a peculiar liking for the speculative character of Scotland—in fact, that you admire Scotch people more than the impulsive English. Of course, Rosa is Scotch from her father's side, and I hardly know if she claims any connection with the Hindoos.'

Monsieur seemed very uncomfortable, and gave a spasmodic start when Miss Haddington hinted at the probability of his having a former Scotch *amour*.

'Don't you think the reason of my ability to pick up some Scotch saying or terse expression rests in the similarity of many French and Scotch words?' he replied, in a sort of abstract musing. 'However, I am particularly charmed with Scotch ladies; but, as a whole, the more I see of British people the more I admire. Your black blot, however, is your narrow spirit of religious intolerance. Physically, Britain is a splendid, robust country, and should be made far more productive and remunerative. In most countries, but especially in Britain, agriculture as a science is but imperfectly understood. The truth is, farmers are almost as afraid of innovations in land cultivation as the Calvinist of more artistic modes of spiritual adoration. It is sheer ignorance of the great plan of creation running in all animate and inanimate nature which makes the various nations clamour for protection bills, and our nation will never attain to anything like steady prosperity until the majority of all civilized nations believe that real, sound, and profitable internationalism rests in free and righteous exchange of all industries of manufacture and agriculture. The main thing to discover is what each country can best and most profitably produce, and to abide by such productions, at least until these are brought to the utmost perfection. Physical nature is sublimely arranged, so much so that the universal brotherhood of humanity seems encased in its bosom. Every country has its marked distinguishing powers of productiveness, as well as its particular indigenous seeds and plants; and these facts in themselves preach and teach social and political science the conclusive argument that the great, good God really means all His creatures to live in just, loving, and helpful exchange of trade and commerce. However, agriculture, as well as social science, is but in its infancy, simply beginning to believe that wisdom standeth at the gates of every city and

farmstead, crying, "Come unto me, ye foolish lovers of bigotry and persecution, and buy wine and milk without money and without price."

'I only wish I could reply to such remarks,' Miss Haddington said. 'However, I have the honesty to admit I know next to nothing of science; and such cosmopolitanism can only be understood, I fear, by the learned and studious. Speaking, however, of the exterior appearance of nature, this shire will appear tame and commonplace in variety of expression, especially to such as you, who revel in the grand and sublime.'

'Rather,' he replied, in musing tones. 'While you spoke, my mind ran off in communion with the spirits of departed great ones. One can fancy they hear Sir Walter Scott's spirit echoing, "Here I find no fitting scene for lordly pomp or churchman's pride." However, the magic hand of art can do much to embellish the less attractive tracts of land; but when art endeavours to reproduce a copy of the sublime and awful in nature, its boldest conceptions, as well as most harmonized colouring, are but tame imitations. Still true art appears to me as man, the child, thinking out the great architectural constructions and designs of the great Parent Builder. Here, without doubt, we miss the serpentine lake, towering promontory, and sylvan retreats which invoke the god and goddess of poetry, and inspire the stammering tongue to speak seraphic eloquence.'

'How gushing you are, Monsieur!' the delighted lady said. 'Your enthusiasm makes me realize a soul in nature, and, I might say, within myself. I blush to make the confession, yet I never before felt conscious of a soul within me. Would I could reply intelligently to your sayings! When I listen to such conversation, I feel there is indeed great need for a movement for the emancipating of women from ignorance and frivolity. I am such a dull, commonplace creature, merely absorbed in gossip and fashion, that every part of nature is aliège. Would you believe, I feel no difference in the centre of a wood than in an open field, save that in the former you cannot see far before you, and are for ever getting entangled in brushwood! Seeing you so long for the sublime and splendid, you must hasten to Wales. There you will find mountain scenery, and a more inviting atmosphere; and I believe the lakes and mountains in Cumberland and Westmoreland vie in beauty, if not in sublimity, with some of the more rugged grandeur and enchanting lochs of the north of Scotland. However, I have such a dislike to foot excursioning I know little of either, save from report. Somehow I have no great desire to visit the lonely wilds where the gods of war, of poetry, and thunder dwell in strange contrast. To me it is dreadful standing alone in these hoary dales, scared with the flapping wing of some vulture eagle. I am a creature of civilization. I like human faces, and the company inside a railway carriage or an amusing novel is the most I study. My greatest pleasure, however, is a brisk trot in the great West End Park, with a lively male companion at my side, full of fun and puns. To me man is God's most interesting work, so full of complex charms and indefinable pleasures that I cannot get beyond him to the more abstruse study of the phenomena of inanimate nature.'

'Ah! you are highly complimentary to the male sex, and I regret so many of us are empty of all elements of real interest,' Monsieur replied. 'You have paid my sex a very flattering compliment, and in return, I remark that I regard a lovely, intelligent woman as the sublimest and sweetest poem in creation. However, while such are my ideas, I confess I am yet too material and plodding for being able fully to appreciate a perfect woman; you, therefore, are far beyond me. If I do not misunderstand you, you study and admire the inner and more spiritual beauty of soul and mind more than mountain and lake grandeur, which certainly does not contain or reveal so much of sublime mystery as one touch of real human sympathy. Some day, however, I hope to be able to rise higher and feel more devoutly. At present, nature is my holy of holies, the supreme temple, the robe of God's glory, the harmonious beat of His heart of beneficence, before whose awful infinitude of majesty I prostrate my whole spirit. Like you, I have only heard of the rugged scenery of Scotland; and should I be so fortunate as to penetrate as far north as the Highlands, I expect to be transported into a state of thrilling ecstasy inexpressible and transcendental. Such being the case, I warn you to be prepared for reading some morning of a wonderful phenomenon in the form of a mad Frenchman worshipping the moon by dancing on his head.'

'May I be there to see!' she exclaimed; 'only I fear my want of sympathy with your enthusiasm would chill your fervour. It is said only a tipsy man can really enjoy the society and jokes of the debauchee. So likewise, I suppose, only an ardent worshipper of nature could enter into the rapt frenzy of your varying emotions. You overrate me when you conclude I am capable of studying the mind and soul. On the contrary, my study of men does not extend beyond the consideration of social position, reputed wealth, physical appearance, style of dressing, and general manner. I am a marrying lady, and all I want is a suitable man to love me, and me to love him, and all the rest of the world may just move on as best it may. By the bye, speaking of marrying, allow me, while I remember, to give you the first formal invitation to sister's forthcoming marriage with Earl F——.'

'Ah! that is indeed news,' Monsieur replied. 'I had no idea your sister was engaged to the wealthy Earl. I hope it is a marriage of mutual affection. If I am in England, I shall certainly be glad to be at an English marriage.'

'A thousand thanks, Monsieur,' she said. 'You have indeed made me happy, and I shall tell mamma we can count on you. I never suppose sister paused to inquire if she loved the wealthy old man. Mamma and papa encouraged him, and he beat up his suit with such devoted attention that I suppose my sister did not see her way to refuse. In our times, love is not in the least essential to marriage. The bride to be will have everything she could desire. The presents the dear Earl is giving her are far beyond anything I have ever heard of. It makes me fancy she is some fairy queen. What a circle of gay society she will rule over! I really wish such an offer had come my way.'

'I see you enjoy marriage feast and finery, and light, airy chit-chat

with a wealthy suitor,' Monsieur remarked. 'Courting is only a serious business where there is the anxiety and fervour of ardent affection. The Earl certainly should bestow largely out of his treasury to his beloved, simply because love delighteth to give—in fact, is only pleased when giving. Yet what are gifts? Nothing certainly in themselves, but simply an earnest of the profusion and richness of the inner emotions of tenderness. Therefore, the lover who loves faithfully and feels richly, but who has no material wealth whereby to symbolize his mental and affectional grandeur, is nobler far than a mere position-adorning earl with his jewel-boxes.'

'Well, looking at things in that serious way, I suppose gifts are nothing of themselves,' Miss Haddington said. 'However, I find money is everything, and love of very small account. To me, a man without wealth and position is nothing. Whatever position I had been born to, I feel I would only marry to raise myself. Mere being married is nothing. It is the society, and the advantages and enjoyment of wealth, that constitute the happiness. Hence the reason that I dislike most of our fashionable novels, because the centre figure, be it man or woman, spends all their good and bad energies chasing the mad fancy of love. More exalted women of literary tastes find enjoyment in the bliss of kindred affinities, twin spirits, and discourse fluently on the inner marriage of hearts and such moonshine, which looks fine on paper, but is bad current coin.'

'I fear we will not agree in regard to love and social position,' Monsieur said. 'Of course I do not undervalue good position, and the man or woman who does is a fool. But those who love for position, for what it gives, more than for an opportunity to act nobly, and for the power and privilege of exalting all less favoured, are mean, crawling dust-eaters. Position and money in themselves are mere deluding, carnal things. One noble thought, one generous impulse, is of more value than millions of money; and if our social positions and advantages are greater than our love, our charity, and holy aspirations, then we are simply beggars on horseback, hollow-hearted cheats. Your ideas also in regard to marriage clash with mine. If ever I marry, I must have a wife who can be my companion all through. A house-keeper can do the mere detail of making a man physically comfortable, which after all is but a small matter. In marriage, however, a man seeks for a soul whose aspirations and yearning desires strengthen and stimulate his own; for a heart to beat in harmony with all his joys, sorrows, hopes, and fears; and a voice to speak back all his endearing tenderness;—in a word, for a being to complete and perfect his life here, and help him to attain to divine perfection of character, so that he might be ready for peering beyond the grave without fear or doubt. However, I admire your honesty, but I cannot think the mere round of fashionable gaiety and everyday gossip can fill in all your time, any more than it can satisfy the wants of your entire nature.'

'Of course I leave a margin for lingering or loitering over each succeeding new novel,' she said, rather piqued. 'However, I must say I am heartily sick of the sameness of the plots and the poverty of ideas in that now very popular class of literature. It appears to me that class of

writers are in most cases fearfully behind the times. Even if they tell plain truth, and tear aside the curtain of modern pretension, and teach doctrine as plain and convincing as Jesus Christ, I really wish we had a novel or two dealing with the living men and manners and prejudices of our own day. Of course the critics are very hard sometimes, and take upon themselves to tell an author what he or she should or should not touch upon. However, were I to write I would despise all servile obedience to rules and limitations. I think writing by pattern must be very much like praying from a book, rather a cold, soulless business. With all my frivolity and regard to the comforts of position, I love to meet a master spirit who in happy and mighty transport of spirit overleaps all bounds, and, like a war-horse shaking the dew from his mane, laughs to scorn the petty conceits and narrow prejudices of conventionalism, and leads the aroused spirit up into the beatitudes of self-reverence.'

'Heartily I say amen!' Monsieur replied. 'Philosophy and theology in essay form are not so attractive save to robust minds. But all thought and feeling have attractions and saving power, even to the simple and uneducated, as these come flowing fresh from the minds and hearts of living, acting, suffering, aspiring men and women. Every one in these times reads stories; and we need novel-writers who can make our members of Parliament and our leading theological teachers and expounders of spontaneous generation, leading characters in their works. As you wisely say, there is far too much unintelligent subserviency to dry formula, and too little devotion to conscience. The truth is, in our times when the voice from heaven cries Write, it appears to me the inspired prophet or prophetess first begins to see what will suit the popular tastes and win the most lucrative reward. Deny it as we may, life would soon sink into a fearful level of mere eating and drinking without these pioneers of righteousness. How easily we pronounce the word "life," and yet what a complex mystery it is! Therefore, the author who would reproduce life must be profound in thought, intense in sympathy, sage in wisdom, and intense in earnest devotion to religion as lived and taught by Jesus. I need not tell you, Miss Haddington, that human life has angel flights and demon descents; and the writer who can grasp these extremes, and with firm trust still point the way to universal concord, is one sent out from God with a divine torch to show the way. Often, often I ask, Is life worth living? especially when I think of the myriads who only realize it as a succession of tragic suffering.'

'For goodness' sake, Monsieur, do not look so grave!' the young lady said, drawn still more toward the passionate General. 'You appear looking inward into some familiar, haunting tragedy. By the bye, speaking of tragedy, I remember hearing mamma ask the great poet, Martin Dawson, what he considered the saddest tragedy, and with visible indignation he said the saddest tragedy to his mind was a loving, confiding woman's heart broken and ruthlessly trodden under foot by a weak, unprincipled seducer. Excuse me, Monsieur, for introducing such a subject. I can see you are annoyed. After all, what a dull conversation for a picnic! Here certainly is something fresh for a

novel. If you plan the plot, some of the more intellectual ladies in the other carriage will fill in the thought and feeling. Have I offended you that you look so grave?’

‘By no means, dear lady; on the contrary, you are charming in your natural frankness,’ Monsieur said. ‘I confess, however, that I am thinking on Dawson’s saddest tragedy. Whether the Old Testament account of creation and man’s fall be correct or not, all history is, alas! only too full of man’s cowardly hiding of sin, and weak excuse-making for the commission thereof. However, do not let my earnest gravity in the least reflect on your bounding cheerfulness. Whatever the reason, I confess that at heart I am extremely sad. In fact, it appears under the present condition of things, no true man or woman of matured years can be otherwise. You, however, are but in the springtime of life, and being naturally gay, are looking forward to a long summer of unclouded sunshine. It may be I am a brooding misanthrope; but even if we have sufficient wealth, Christianity, philosophy, or physical comforts to satisfy our own particular case, we have simply to look abroad over one large city of weltering misery, to feel the iron of indefinable pain and sadness entering into our souls. Fortify ourselves as we may, we have only to reflect unselfishly and earnestly for one half-hour to find the mildew of sorrow stealing over us.’

‘What a philosopher you are, Monsieur!’ Miss Haddington replied; ‘not the least like a gay, thoughtless Frenchman. As a general, you will die at the post of duty, praying for France with the death-wound eating out your life. Seeing you admire my frankness, I must confess I am far behind you in philanthropic sympathy. The weltering misery of great cities, or the world at large, never troubles me. I simply regard it all as a matter of course. The poor, I consider, are a set of miserable grumblers. Set them right to-day, papa says, and they will be where they were to-morrow. As for these ragged, dirty children who beset one at every corner, I hate the ugly imps, and do not see why we should be so anxious to sustain their lives. The poor seem to abound in children; and I am sure it is better the best half of them should die in infancy than live to nothing better than an inheritance of poverty and ignorance. No wonder God in mercy sends plagues of fever and small-pox to carry them away!’

‘It strikes me, Miss Haddington, that you are simply thoughtlessly repeating sayings you have heard from reckless, profane lips of men and women much older,’ Monsieur remarked. ‘A woman is always associated in my mind with all that is gentle, redemptive, and holy; and to hear you thus carelessly speak of the poor as creatures born for some special state of degrading subjection to oppression and prejudice, awakens within me anything but pleasant emotions. The good God never sends any special plagues, only mercy, love, and inspiring wisdom. It is our ignorance, our indolence, our superstition, and selfish oppression which create plagues many and severe, and as a natural consequence, these fall most heavily on the poor and less physically protected from poisonous influences. Plagues come as sanitary detectives, to thrust us, if possible, out of our cesspools of ignorance and superstition into the glorious sunlight of intelligent recognition of the

healthful laws of progressive life. Imps or no imps, these ragged, impudent pests, as you seem to consider them, are our very flesh and blood; and if we will not in life claim relationship with them, in the appalling corruption of disease and death we lose our superior identity, and all our advantages of education and wealth cannot extract the deadly poison from our veins. These imps, you see, are more generous in their inheritance of fever and small-pox plagues than we are of our inheritance of wealth and education; and with touching and filial tenderness they entwine us in the common embrace of disease and death.'

'What a picture, Monsieur! Yet I fear there is too much truth in the grim outline, and a creeping sensation of fear and shame is stealing over me,' she said. 'Oh dear, what a Radical you are! No wonder you are lingering in Lancashire, in constant intercourse with lovely Rosa, the great social reformer. Perhaps you are both right in thus striving for the upraising of the ignorant, and the dethroning of all exclusive privilege, but for my own part, I must plead almost entire ignorance alike of the evils and the essential remedies. Somehow I always think all religious and social as well as political Radicals do all merely for a living, or to be seen and praised of men. Even your very dear friend Rosa is not above gossip by her many eccentric inconsistencies. Of course, she visits the poor, and even cleans their dirty hovels, and teaches their children, and writes arousing articles in magazines, and believes God inspires every human being as much as He did the Bible writers, if they only listen to Him and bend their will to His. Yet she often uses her liberty of conscience in strange ways.'

'I fear Mr. Hamilton will turn round and call us to account if we use liberties with his gifted cousin,' Monsieur said in sharp tones. 'Rosa, as you all agree in calling that admirable woman, is no common personage, and cannot be judged by modern conventionalism. Whatever others may think, I know she is animated by the spirit of divine goodness, and bears humanity in her bosom, as a mother the various members of her family.'

Henry Hamilton was engaged in agreeable bantering conversation with the other ladies, nevertheless he had now and then picked up fragmentary snatches of Monsieur's and Miss Haddington's conversation, and was most agreeably surprised at the amount of general intelligence and sharpness of the said lady. He was but a poor officer, or he might have been building fairy castles of ideal fancy. Of one thing he was convinced, that Miss Haddington only needed the right man and the proper motive to make her a noble woman and a saviour of many.

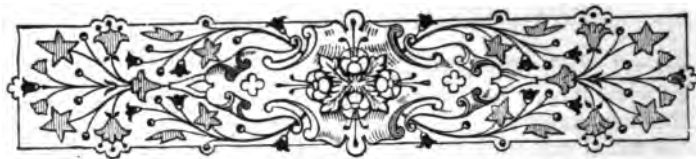
'Ah! Monsieur, you have by your hot protest revealed your tender point,' she exclaimed, stung to bitterness with the fact that she was nothing compared to her matchless rival. 'Rosa, lovely Rosa, is your ideal, the representative of that noble womanhood all fanatical dreamers descry as the panacea of all evil, and I certainly should be careful not to dim the lustre of her shining fame. I never before knew the best way to win male admiration was by turning a Bible-woman. After all, I believe it a most successful way to carry on romantic flirtation.'

However, I admire Rosa ; we all do very much,—in fact, no party seems perfect without her ; nevertheless, we never set her down as perfect, and with her dear aunt, we all lament her freethinking and departure from what is called orthodox Christianity. However, you have told me we should not judge such as her by modern conventionalism. The mistake is, however, that society will and does judge all by its manners and maxims ; and her flirtation with Earl F—— was open to all even after he was engaged. Then think of the way she disappeared with Major Wray at our last party ! Ah ! beg pardon, you were not there ; and of course the Major is over fifty, and an old friend of her father, but it just lets one see how people will speak. Martin Dawson, too, is another of Rosa's favourites, but he is such a brilliant genius, any one would be proud of his society. What books he writes, and how he carries the mind away from all sordid cares ! Yet society is ungrateful, and even takes upon it to criticize its leaders and redeemers.'

Poor Monsieur, a fiend might have pitied him as the poisoned arrow entered his soul, setting it on fire of hell. One consolation, the lodge was now in view. Another five minutes' drive, and the company would be more general.

'So, so, you busy ladies have been actually measuring Rosa with the old-fashioned manners and maxims of soulless respect to customs and forms?' he replied, with a sneering laugh. 'The more a real, truthful, impassioned book of honest intention is denounced by opposing criticism, the brighter its flame shines. So likewise, the more indolent, spiteful women attempt to tarnish the lustre of Rosa's pre-eminent goodness, the tinkling bells of gossip will simply draw more eyes to admire the haloing glory encircling her brow. In the quiet of sober reflection, the heart of humanity knows its redeemers ; and while time is, Rosa will sit enthroned in the affections of mankind as the queen of women, and the mother of many daughters who will yet arise to be ministering angels, clothed with the light of intelligence, mighty with the divine mission of love, and healing with the balm of charity which hopeth all things.'





CHAPTER XXXIV.

A RAMBLE IN THE COUNTRY.

THE summer lodge of Sir David Haddington was some twelve miles from the town of W——, in Lancashire. The building, however, was more a castle of baronial architecture, and surrounded by every conceivable form of artistic beauty. Inside the lodge all forms of elegance which wealth and refined taste could supply were spread with lavish hand. In short, it was a sort of modern paradise, abounding in floral grandeur and variety, and rich in all relics of antique interest; and all was arranged with an air of physical comfort and mental refreshment. Paintings from the best artists, portraits of living and departed poets, painters, philosophers, and politicians, and sculpture from the masterhand of Michael Angelo, led the soul away in rapt aspiration, and quickened the impulses with proud emulation to be among the heroes of earth and the nobility of heaven.

When luncheon was laid in the great hall, the young ladies donned little caps and white aprons, and acting as waiting-maids, lent an additional charm to the romantic repast. When wine and walnuts took the place of more substantial fare, mirth, music, repartee, and all sorts of mental exercises and enjoyments were engaged in. As time sped, and glasses were filled and emptied, a few of the more matured ladies and gentlemen got heated over the monkey theory of mankind, natural selection, and spontaneous generation. Although the company was small, there was great diversity of opinion, many forms of religious beliefs, not a little bigotry, and more profound intelligence than is found in most larger companies. For example, one affirmed it was possible for the human mind to reason out or realize by understanding the actual existence of a personal God, concluding that the mind which had given form and individuality to all animate and inanimate creations must represent the highest degree or kind of form and individuality, and that the mind or soul which can conceive of God and learn to aspire after His excellence must, when freed from evil and ignorance, be able to conceive rationally of His divine personality. Another doubted the very existence of any supreme intelligence, and ventured to conclude that mankind and all planetary creations, rolling in a sort of savage concord, are the outcome or relics of a succession of gods, some great in evil and others in good, and that goodness seemed

from some standpoints to be the most preserving quality, and most likely to be triumphant in the latter times. A third considered all speculative opinion a humbug, and making of books a heart-wearing weariness, and that the whole sum of the matter was for every man and woman to make the most of this life, and after close their eyes in death with a common-sense composure befitting rational creatures who neither know whence they come nor whither they are going. The ladies had some of them taken part in these speculative theories, and Rosa had more than once proven herself an able opponent of the more rationalistic thinkers. The eldest Miss Clayton had, however, made these studies her special work for some time, and was impatient to display her mental lucubrations, as well as to defend what she considered the sanctity of filial veneration and child-like trust in the fatherhood of God.

‘Ladies and gentlemen,’ she said, rising to her feet,—and her deep, hazel eyes looked far into space, as if invoking the aid of the Great Spirit,—‘as some of you know, I am preparing a work for the press, to deal in a logical and philosophic manner with some of the specious sophism of our monkey theory and spontaneous-generation origin of mankind; and as some rather extravagant ideas seem to be growing in some of your minds, I embrace the present moment of agreeable discussion to throw out some suggestive hints. Perhaps some of you will, when I am done, be inclined to call them comical or ironical hints. Such being the case, you will at once conclude that I am not to attempt to solve the gigantic mystery of life, or lay bare the first move in the immense plan of material creation. For while we speak of earth, and dive to and fro therein, seeking reasonable answers to the great hunger of unrest, we know that our planet is but one of many; and as we have no accurate knowledge as yet of the priority of these planets, and know absolutely nothing of their past histories, we are yet far from being in a position to establish any scientific dogma of the cause or beginning of life. As we go backward, we find cycle after cycle of time receding, and each cycle launching the inquiring spirit into a profounder and more distant eternity. I say, when we discover our earth is but one of many worlds, and that we know not whether it be the first, third, or sixth in the creative plan, we cannot with anything like consistency conclude that life germs first took form and colour in our planet. With unbearable dogmatism, however, the promulgators of spontaneous generation affirm that the said spontaneous generation is the all and origin of life that we can ever know. The known of to-day was the unknown a hundred years ago; nay, it is all like miracle compared to the modes of travelling and corresponding of a hundred years ago, and a hundred years hence the unknown to us will be realized practical knowledge to our children’s children. The spontaneous-generation theorizer simply tells us there was a fulness of time when the earth was groaning to give birth to myriad forms of organized life, each having grown and matured from cells or germ beds. But the revealer of such a creation, who says a creator and creation, according to the theistic conception of life, is a huge monstrosity, does not take the trouble to inquire how such a theory is related to and sustained by the manifesta-

tions of organized life and its requirements and conditions as now seen and felt. It is very easy imagining a theory, and a little learning and a great amount of subtle ingenuity can build up a sort of reasonable foundation, and join all together in a heterogeneous whole. Were it not that youths and maidens, and many older men and women, do not care to inquire into the root of every philosophic or scientific theory, I would not take the trouble to reply to these secular bigots. We have been told there was a fulness of time when the earth gave out spontaneous-organized forms of life. If such a time was, and such a creation or huge beginning of generation a historic fact or prehistoric assumption, was it full-grown lions, bears, oxen, horses, fowls of every wing, and animals of every species, and likewise a fully-developed man and woman that was thus spontaneously thrust from the infinite womb of mother earth? or simply a teeming mass of sprawling helplessness? If it was the former, reason and common sense turn from the specious fiction with supreme contempt, because no amount of credulity or sophism can convince a sane mind of the possibility of such a monstrous miracle. The moment the child is matured in the womb it forces its way into a wider region of life conditions, and the very necessity of its life compels it thus to act, or it would perish in the very germ-cells which gave it its individuality of life. So, likewise, if mother earth conceived, organized, and individualized all the different species of animal life, including mankind, as the highest form and most perfect evolution, the necessity of such organized, individualized forms of life compelled them to be spontaneously thrust upon the surface of the earth in a state of sprawling helplessness. I do not know how some of the creatures who live, move, and find their elements and conditions of life in water, act in regard to their young; but it is an established fact that all mammalia, in their infancy or beginning, are helpless, and incapable of existing without maternal assistance. So with all kinds of fowl. It will be seen we have admitted the possibility of mother earth, in the fulness of time, ejecting all these helpless, organized forms of life spontaneously from its groaning immensity of conceived life, but where are the nursing-bottles, the necessary shelter-nooks, and the selected food for each helpless want? If life-producing protoplasm has been found, and spontaneous generation imagined and set up as a rational, common-sense theory, a miraculous feeding, sustaining Providence must be supplied. Nay, the creator of the protoplasm, or the cause of all we see and understand of solar systems, is still far behind our most ancient researches, and is more subtle than the subtlety of nature, and above, beyond, and around all science there is an infinity of nascence or unknown not yet penetrated by finite thought; and both the atheist and the theist must admit that the mystery of life is yet away at the beginning, when God formed solar systems and all that is found therein. When we set out for the all of life and life manifestations, and the necessity and naturalness of death in mere cause and effect, the vast laboratory of nature will unfold evolution after evolution of forms of life, and kinds of beauty and degrees of harmony, each and all teeming with wonder and unique in adaptation; and so long as a reverent love of study and

yearning hunger of earnest inquiry pervades the mind, the evolutionist finds all creation or nature very good, and accepting death as the natural end of all modes of individual life, he has a sort of holy litany chanting in the infinite recesses of his fatherless mind. It is only when secularism condescends to dogmatize, and deals with only one side of science and revelation, that we seek to discuss its pretensions or assumptions, and no thoughtful mind can deny the fact that honest, earnest atheism is better than mere canting fanaticism, and that the morally pure and philosophic secularist has a religion and an immortality. He or she worships an ideal humanity, and according to their light work for the emancipating of the mind from all error; and in a corporate immortality they find sweet solace that their love, their heroism, their charity and thought will continue influencing all generations of men long after their individuality and its mystery of quivering love and restless activity has commingled with the unconscious material of nature, which continues to sustain other evolutions of higher conscious organized individualism. The cynic, too, confronts the unsolved mystery of life with his great passions all consumed and withered up in sensual excesses, and with reverence and adoration all sacrificed on the ignoble altar of selfishness; and with his mind saturated with disgust and his heart corroded with a dead past, he mocks and jeers at the corporate immortality of the philanthropist and reformer, and trembles at the name of the Christian's God. To him life is a lie, a cheat, a sort of solemn farce, and with dreadful despair he grins back at the death-worm encoiled in the centre of his being, which waits with vulture cruelty to devour the very life it unbidden gave. Thus it will be seen, while I condemn the conclusions of dogmatic promulgators of one-sided theories, I regard the various unprejudiced discoveries of science as of immense value in raising and enlightening the mind, and more and more revealing the infinite wisdom and ever-creating activity of the great Architect and upholder of nature. While revealing the minute harmony and utility of every atom of matter, as well as the gigantic method and perfect fitness of each successive cycle of evolutions, these scientific discoveries expand and enlighten the human mind, and enable it more and more to realize its affinity with the infinite. That is, in discovering more of wisdom, more of rational, intelligent construction, adaptation, and beauty in nature, the human mind finds itself, discovers its vastness of understanding, and apprehends its strength of reason and hunger of inquiry; and as it gathers up thought by thought of the infinite wisdom, it realizes that it is within a holier and diviner temple than the most gorgeous creations of art, and that a great, yearning Parent is infusing His very love to feed the yearning desire for more light and more righteousness. You have been jesting as well as warring over the monkey origin and cerebro-spinal missing link; but the Darwin theory has its moral, and it is a very touching one, viz. that it is better to be evolved from the monkey to the man, than to be created a man and degenerate into the monkey. I will, however, conclude this picnic address by saying, I believe all biblical and scientific criticism will in the end agree in discovering a personal, beneficent God as upholder of all material order and beauty,

and as inspirer of every noble thought and pure feeling. However, before the human mind can intelligently apprehend a personal God, far more mysterious in attributes and excellences of grace and goodness than all the wonderful phenomena of solar systems, it must be moving in harmony with His love and purity, and in deepest sympathy with His mercy and forbearing goodness. In the words of Jesus, only the pure in heart can see God. Therefore, for ages to come, personal immortality and the whence and whither of mankind will be open, disputed questions, and criticism may be as cold, dogmatic, and absurd as the orthodox doctrine it seeks to sweep away; and democracy, if not tempered with righteous moderation and reverent conservation of all that is beautiful and good, will be as selfish and not less sensual than more barbarous legislation. In the future, however, when the fuller development of more spiritual and sincere worship has raised the soul to direct communion with its Author, when the very spirit and purity and zeal of Jesus are in every heart, God as a personal Father will be realized and honoured. In the future our present vague questioning and vaunting conceits and unnatural sectarian differences will be bridged over and hallowed by the eternal calm of soundness of mind and tender charity of heart. I am not, however, losing sight of the fact that we who are yet the struggling minority have many political and social battles to fight; nevertheless, there are here and there great openings in the hoary walls of tradition and superstition, and truth, with its mighty river of righteousness, is flowing in, and men and women are opening their hearts and minds, and feeling the gracious, life-imparting warmth of God's very life. With all our shams, our desire for outward display, with all inconsistencies, eager thirst for money, selfishness, scepticism, and want of united earnestness, the world was never more enlightened and more advanced in art and all the wonders of inventive genius, and never more blessed with inspired apostles and prophets, and never more full of manly men seeking to incarnate the very image of God. The great Author of life I regard as the very perfection of form, simply because the Almighty Being who has given form and individuality to all His evolutions or creations must delight in form, and live and move through form. It is not, however, necessary to conceive of His form as being limited in its powers and conditions of being, such as other forms of organized, conscious, intelligent life we are familiar with. In our present state we can form no expressible conception of a more glorified body; and the form of God, although real and individual, may be as mysterious and wonderful to finite understanding in its mere babyhood, as the subtle life-essence which beautifies every manifestation and form of life, and yet eludes the most ingenious analytic. When science comes as a light to the feet, and with a torch to our spiritual vision, lending courage to doubting faith, and imparting to the mind the power to shake off its grave-clothes, and triumph over disease, ignorance, and all forms of evil, let us hail it with cordial welcome by whatever name called. The science, however, which seeks the living among the dead, will simply turn to ashes, and disappear among its primitive dust; and above all disputation and arrogant or dogmatic assumptions, the sciences of wisdom

and reverent understanding will continue the very inspiration of heaven, chasing away all evil, and re-creating the soul anew for the fuller inception of His indwelling presence, and the blessedness of the time when nations shall dwell in peace, and no longer study the hellish art of war.'

When Miss Clayton sat down, Rosa clasped her in her arms, and while she kissed her cheeks, tears of joy and mutual enthusiasm baptized their sisterly kiss. Some of the gentlemen regretted having introduced evolution and spontaneous generation as subjects of remark, but the most admitted she had sustained her plea, and had given evidence that woman's universal emancipation from all unjust subordination and exclusion from equal rights with man will be a valuable acquisition to society all over. Mr. Clayton was the last to compliment his daughter on her maiden speech; and while he kissed her carnation cheeks, flushed with the fervour of spiritual enthusiasm, his heart thrilled with a deep, beautiful, divine joy, and throbbed with a blessedness mystic and indefinable, for he had begotten a child to crown his head with honour, to exalt his name, and glorify it with the everlasting blossoms of immortality.





CHAPTER XXXV.

THE ORCHARD.

FARTHER on in the day the picnic party were divided in twos and fours, rambling in the beautiful grounds surrounding the lodge. By some happy circumstance or nice tact, the French general and Rosa had got isolated from the party, and had wandered on into a large orchard which joined the south side of the winding carriage drive. They were lovers, and, as a matter of course, every yellow leaf, streaking sun-ray, or rude branch of a storm-bent tree was quivering with the poetry and enchantment of romance. The early fruit was nearly all gathered and carefully stored, and brown seared leaves were dropping one by one. To most sensitive, poetic minds there comes sad sweetness on the autumn breeze; and its deep golden sky and wide acres of ripened corn bend the soul in deep reflection. In early spring, even the aged feel the blood leaping more freely, and in concert with singing birds, they lilt some old snatches of youthful love. So in autumn, even youth is sobered with the gorgeous mantle of nature's sublime beneficence. The tone and colouring of earth and sky are so rich and awe-inspiring in majestic grandeur, that involuntarily the head is bent in holy veneration, and the mind thrust amid the maturity and mutability of all life manifestations.

Monsieur and Rosa were both naturally romantic and poetic, as well as reflective and reverent, and they rambled on as if under the shadow of a great realized spirit of all blessedness, and their hearts thrilled with a feeling of rapture too deep for expression. All seemed so new, so rare, yet so natural, and so much in harmony with their inner feelings, that life suddenly appeared in a more enlarged as well as more inviting aspect. The reflection of their mutual love rendered every object in nature surpassingly beautiful; and as they gazed into each other's sparkling eyes, all eloquent with the glow of their confessed passion, and listened to the chiming melody of each other's voice, they were so supremely happy that heaven could only add continuity to complete their bliss.

'Don't you think, darling,' Monsieur said, drawing her arm farther into his, 'that we are very much like the primitive pair wandering in a garden of sinless love? Strange, when happiness is pulsating the inner soul, all external surroundings echo back the same thrilling beauty and joy! How hard it is conceiving of evil either in the

individual soul or the world at large, when all is peaceful within, and every circumstance seeming to aid our dear desires! Rosa, I cannot intelligently express what I mean, yet some great unshapen ideas, both of our original innocence and independent will to rush into thoughts and actions which would introduce elements of discord into the world, are floating in my brain.'

'I fear only in imagination can we conceive of ourselves as in some respect akin to our primitive parents,' Rosa replied. 'The very fact that we can speak of a very ancient, primitive pair, and speculate in regard to their feelings and ideas of earth and the Author of life, is sufficient evidence that there is small likeness between them and us, save in mere physical form. Innocent and ignorant alike they must have been; for even granting that God did immediately converse with the infancy of mankind, He could only impart such knowledge as their understanding could apprehend, and what their round of daily duties demanded. However, we may understand something of their mutual fondness for one another, and their child-like trust in God, and mystic wonder as they watched the varying beauty and glory of each succeeding season. I think you have expressed yourself very clearly; but perhaps the only mystery is, we cannot understand why it is that we so respond to pain and pleasure, joy and sadness. As you say, it is almost impossible for us to realize the awfulness of the opposite of pleasure and bliss, when experiencing tender reciprocity to our every desire, and while our happiness lasts we cannot conceive of ever again being tossed in a sea of distress. Such a train of thought gives a faint idea of how little we really know of our over-soul in its infinitude of latent possibilities, and our present state of feeling may also enable us to understand how helplessly we are at the mercy of circumstances over which we may have small control. Such thoughts should likewise teach us to be ever looking ahead, and praying for strength for all exigencies of joy or sorrow. Thus self-knowledge and self-reverence are the root of wisdom and the beginning of religion.'

'Ah! as usual, you philosophize as artistically and sagely as you sing naturally and with pathos,' Monsieur remarked. 'Turning from the primitive pair to the present surroundings, allow me, Frenchman-like, to exclaim how grand and beautiful a scene this is! Dearest, I think the beauty and sublimity of autumn infinitely more glorious and suggestive than the other three seasons. Here and there I see the late fruit still hanging like golden jewels sparkling in the mellow sunbeams. It is indeed sadly interesting, as well as deeply instructive, musing on the winter apples waiting for a few touches of biting frost to mature their sweetness, so that it becomes the very sweetness of sweet.'

'Autumn is indeed peculiarly gorgeous and soul-stirring, alike in aspect and influence,' she remarked. 'Yet, ah! how I love summer, with its glorious beauty, life-giving sunshine, and almost nightless day, and golden hopes! Summer is the queen of the year. Busy humming bees and singing birds make me reel with joy. I often wish I could speed with the revolving earth, ever keeping on the side nearest the sun's radiant beams. How the lark must weary for the return of summer, so that it may warble its adoration to the bridegroom of earth,

and when wearied sink to rest in a swoon of delight among the clovery fragrance of corn-fields! The Divine Artist who first gave flowers their beauty and form must be indefinably beautiful. Vance, I worship flowers as a fond mother a lovely child. Sometimes I think the heart of God is enthroned in their mystic beauty, and I prostrate my whole nature before them, tenderly fondling their leaves and inhaling their delicate fragrance, as I endeavour to find out and understand their sacrament of beauty and sweetness. Some other time I will tell you what I think of winter, with its solemn night and starry vault of vaster life. In autumn, however, the soul grows grave, and memory seems keenly aroused, and all its buried secrets come floating to the surface. Every falling leaf tells of some lost love or withered joy, and the flood-gates of emotion are thrust open by invisible hands; and in every mellow hum of withering zephyrs we hear the sound of far-off voices, and beyond the harvest of death we see dim faces and more spiritual forms of the sacred dust we had hidden away. Ah! yes, autumn is a wise season, and its mystic influence seems to make us realize a sort of annual fulness, when the soul drops off its withered garments of false ideas, and sinful habits, and exclusive selfishness, and puts on new energy and desire, new hopes and fresh enterprise, and offers to God holier vows, and seeks from Him a fuller inspiration. It must be, or we could not feel this mystic sympathy with external nature. Like you, dear Vance, I was thinking on the late fruit with its peculiar lesson. What a Holy Bible nature is! Yet how few are so educated as to be able to read its lessons! Like the winter apple, many human souls are sweetened by the biting frost of affliction. There are many who seem born to suffer and endure, and by choice are for ever found in the shade, ministering to sorrow. It is said, all true greatness is born of the agony of pain. Why it should be I often wonder. We know the winter apple is the sweetest; in like manner, the glory of suffering haloes the head with perennial honour, and makes the heart a sweet fountain of sympathy and charity. A man or woman who is a stranger to deep suffering is but a mere child, even if threescore years have whitened the hair. I cannot bear the society of shallow, unsympathetic natures; they are simply like speaking wax-figures moved by an invisible wire, and society is brimful of these parrot-like creatures, passing themselves off for men and women.'

'Rosa, you charm me every hour more and more,' he replied. 'How you understand alike the soul of external nature and the spirit of society! Your idea of the mind or soul having an annual fulness peculiarly struck me as suggestive. I believe you are right, yet, alas! the great majority have too little soul energy to cast off the old garments of false ideas, sensual habits, and all besetting evils, and even make their latter end worse by absorbing the rotten bigotry, superstition, and selfishness, and wrap each increase of evil, like grave-cloths, around the dwarfed, struggling conscience. I think all the wise court the shade. Even love is not love, but mere lustful passion, until it has been refined and tried in suffering. In early youth I think all love is more or less a mere senseless emotion. Beautiful it certainly is, like all natural emotions, but it neither knows its own wants nor the demand of

its duties. I think we in France act wisely in preventing too early marriages. By the very instincts of nature lovers cast soft glances across the street, the church pew, and over the shop counter, as well as in the school and saloon, and mere youths revel in all the nameless luxury of love's exchange. The emotions, however, in most cases are but like too early spring blossoms, which bear no fruit. Not so with the love of matured understanding and wise experience. It is the gathered volcano of chastened feeling, holy in principle, and tender with intensity of pathos, and perennial with an infinite hunger of yearning desire. Ah! life, awful, undefinable mystery! To-day we revel in the full, fresh completeness of joy and hopeful blessedness; to-morrow the withering blast of adversity, the bloody agony of bereaved affection, the wild wail of desperate despair, or the chilly mildew of disappointment and reproach; and in lonely anguish the orphan tragedian spreads out his or her hands to grasp the invisible source of life, and with dry, parched lips, and bloodshot eyes, and torn soul, gazes into the far silence of space, crying for God, the living God.'

'*Cher* Vance, I like to hear you speak,' she replied, drinking in the impress of his image, and learning to love him more exclusively with every beat of time. 'How just, suggestive, and profound your ideas of human experience are! I feel you must have suffered. It is only by the subtle pathos of suffering and sympathy that we enter into the heights and depths of life's mystery of being, doing, joying, and sorrowing. I agree with you French in not encouraging too early marriages; nevertheless, in all things there should be exceptions. However, law is necessary before the mind is enlightened. In our country men and women marry as recklessly and carelessly as the lower animals mate for a season. And it is high time men and women who have a place as teachers set about sweeping away mere sensational, trashy literature, and set to teaching the rising generation modesty, manliness, self-denial, and common sense. Very early marriages subvert nature, and people the earth with puny children with neither physique nor brain power to accomplish noble work. So likewise mere prudential or mercenary marriages rob the sacred union of all beauty and spirituality; for no self-seeking action can bear within it sanctifying power.'

'When you speak in that way, dearest, a review of my past life makes me dumb with shame,' he said. 'Heretofore I must confess all my loves have been more or less selfish and gross. How nobly you think! Were all marriages unions of soul and mind, earth would indeed be a reflection of heaven. You are right in thinking I have suffered, and it appears to me some early romance or buried love has revealed to you the inner beauty of that divine feeling. A false, selfish love, even when it murders the very life of our life, reveals the reality and beauty of noble love. Somehow I always seem to regard you living above some dead past of dead-sea fruit.'

'I fancy they are lifeless who are loveless,' Rosa said. 'Like most, I have had fond admirers, noble men and manly youths, who have come with their offering; and I have swayed for a short time under the pleasing emotions, but no one ever went so far or acted sufficiently nobly to

stir the inner recesses of my heart. I often think I love everything and every person so well that all my soul of love is diffused in corporate humanity. Or, it may be, I am like the winter apple, waiting in isolated grandeur for the swelling passion of some great soul to sweep me from my lofty peak. When I love, I will exact a full return, and my love must find that which will command reverence and adoration. Nay, I sometimes long for an object so perfect that I could worship his every evolution of soul. However, in defeat and disappointment my love would triumph, for it would turn from self and embrace the universal cry of humanity for light, love, and rest.'

The General was stunned. Some hint or remark of his fair companion had evidently damped his zeal and withered up his hope, and feeling want of confidence to be want of power, he began stammering :

'I always thought you would be hard to win. Generally, however, the more difficult the task, the more determined the aspirant. You have admitted it possible for a strong, heroic passion to move the great centre of your being, and, like some green youth, I can only say, for heaven's sake allow me to confess in abrupt, stammering accents, that I am all vibrating with strong, unconquerable love. From the first hour of our meeting I have followed you in thought and feeling, your devoted slave and rapt adorer. If you do not love me now, let me hope that some day, however distant, you will be mine, and every feeling and thought of heart and mind will be consecrated to our love. Now that I have rudely begun to unbosom myself, I most earnestly thank God for this day and this opportunity. Darling of my heart, why are you starting and trembling, and looking as if you were invoking the aid of unseen spirits to find you a retreat wherein to hide from me? Do not judge me in haste. Although the pressure of love has compelled a confession, I know I am utterly unworthy of you. You are noble and pure as the falling snow, while I—oh, what am I? Nothing save a mildewed, remorseful sinner, ever oscillating between heaven and hell. What am I saying? Rosa, in mercy do not form hasty conclusions from my mad incoherency. Some day I will tell you all my past life, and you will be my judge, and the awarder of my punishment or pardon. Ah! I know I have nothing to fear, for your nature can only bestow love, mercy, and charity; and your sweet smile, a very heaven in itself, will chase the haunting, mocking fiends and black shadows of unrest which ever and anon make me a sort of insane Hamlet, torturing and murdering the very life and love I madly long to possess. The burden of my unhappy country, as well as morbid ideas of life, weigh heavily on me. Day and night I am dreaming of my country's freedom from the rule of a bloodthirsty, unprincipled adventurer, and I need a great-minded, true-hearted woman to help me to work out these ideal longings, and thus emancipate and elevate lovely France. I know I am ambitious both in mind and heart, for I have ventured to aspire to the very queen of women. Rosa, my life, my hope of everything good and beautiful, is centred in you. Ever since I heard the first note of your musical voice, and felt the strange enchantment of your presence, you have lived within me, re-creating me anew in all excellence. Nay, your redeeming charity and superior

understanding have created a heaven of pure blessedness in the smouldering ashes of desperate despair. I know you are impatient for me to be done, that you are eager for an opportunity to speak, so that you may silence me. But, for heaven's sake, have patience, and hear me out, and do not question me until time has created within you a degree of the passion which is consuming me, until the unity of our mutual love has healed the festering sores. However, whatever your decision, on my mental and moral horizon you will ever float an angel of joy and bliss, of healing and holy aspiration, ever reminding me there is a truer and better state of being, into which all must, if wise, prepare to enter. Oh, if I could hope the day will come when you will give me measure for measure! In this, at least, we are alike, in seeking a full, complete, and mutual love, based on adoring reverence.'

Monsieur Vance was deadly pale, and all bedewed with cold perspiration, and, hurried on with rapt adoration, he caught her in his arms, and almost fiercely pressed her to his bosom, and while embracing her with vehement tenderness, again and again kissed her lovely lips and cheeks. With a coldness, however, which he was not altogether unprepared for, she beat him back, and stood gazing as if her soul was searching him through and through, and reading his inner, unexpressed thoughts and feelings.

'Speak, darling!' he exclaimed; 'speak, I pray, and let me know the joy of hope or the death agony of despair. Can it be you so hate and loathe me as to beat me away as a foul thing? Speak, Rosa! oh, speak! for the wild beating of my excited heart is snapping the strings of life. Love! what is love? Why do we love? I am mad with love. Outside of this love I can find neither beauty nor meaning in creation. Sad, sweet mystery of love! How it bubbles and burns and courses in my veins! Rosa, say you love me, and, as a token, restore one of my burning kisses, and I will call on death to dissolve me, in that moment of indefinable rapture, into liquid ecstasy!'

'I am wishing to speak, dear Vance,' she said, with a look so replete with sad, firm submission, that in after years of lonely exile, he often beheld the mystic reflection following him with the beneficence of angelic pity; 'but you are so impulsive and impatient, one must simply stand by and listen in rapt wonderment at your flow of fiery eloquence. If I dare not at present question you as to your past, do not, I pray, seek to shorten our present moment of pure bliss by one-sided, selfish considerations. Dearest Vance, we are now happy. Oh, how happy, let after years review, and let the memory of this autumn day, so replete with suggestive loveliness, and more replete in affectional and mental joyfulness, be a cooling life fountain in the sandy desert of our future pilgrimage. The presence of each other is all we need. With you beauty is sublimely beautiful, because the meaning and joy of life come with the inspiration of love; and with you joy is inexpressibly joyful, for the strange mystery of gladness is also shut up in love. However, I have not yet attained to that perfection of excellence whereby I could give undivided, adoring love to a man who, as you have hinted, may have dark blots on the pages of his past history. Somehow I shrink from all confessions and historic narrations. To me

the *I am* of every and each man is all I care for. If the past has been dark, and the sins repented of, it is the now of the man I love and have to do with; and that which God has pardoned has no existence, for with the pardon He takes away the sin. If, on the other hand, all the past and all the present be one continual going forward, I love best to simply find out an individual as I come in contact with them. With all I believe the past is so far a dead past. Ah, the future! the great, bright, golden future! the full bloom of the infant desire, the ripe fruit of this germinating passion, the harvest-home of all ambitions, let it answer and question, but in mercy do not dash the sweet draught before it has refreshed one pulse of our parched yearning. In the future we may vow and confess, but at present let us have one full, free day in which we will swim in an ocean of delight, in which we will drink in the untutored language of the soul as mirrored in the sparkling eye of innocent love, and without restraint or limitation accept the myriad nameless attentions of pure devotion, basking in the rapt tenderness of fond adoration. Let us, I repeat, have one full, round, free day in which we can sing creation's anthem, calling all very good; but in mercy do not speak of exacting vows, of rash confessions and fixed rules and set times, for all these seem to me like knells of despair, like the winding up of this beating, infinite pulse of life, like digging a grave wherein to bury the fleeting exhalations of onward progression. I know I am mentally stronger than most of my sex, and not so much by inherent superiority as by cultivation of the talents given, and knowledge of self, and wise use of experience; nevertheless, I am not equal for every form of suffering and kind of disappointment. In regard to connubial love, I know I have peculiar ideas, and would be far more exacting than the generality of ladies, who care more for a handsome dress, the comforts of home, and a good position in society, than for the nobler delights and sweeter enjoyments of affectional endearment, and mental and spiritual affinities. Refrain, therefore, dear Monsieur, from pressing for vows and confessions until you can confidently assure yourself there is no fond memory lurking in the recesses of your torn heart. It may be a face, a form, a likeness, a tiny glove, or a faded flower, might suddenly reveal sufficient to blast all our after-happiness. What if some imperishable reality unexpectedly reveal the present surging emotion as a mere passing wave of tender sympathy, as beautiful as natural, and for which no man or woman should be held responsible in any legal form? You may consider me too vague, dreamy, and philosophic, but the very reality of my love seems to bring with it a strange calm, a deep, forecasting conviction. *Cher Monsieur*, you in turn are starting, thinking I am speaking in strange, prophetic strains. However, I will confess I love you far more than the feeble expression of language can describe, and it is the very reality and intensity of this love which compels me to speak as I have done. Unfortunately, we both love passionately, and, I fear, seek more than weak mortals can give or find in this imperfect state. It is better, therefore, that we dream on, asking no questions, making no promises, cutting out no definite future, but simply loving with all our might, and with our might enjoying the full draught of pure love, as it comes

flowing in with its infinite gush of nameless endearments. Is it not enough we love? Why should we torture or hamper that love before it grows more robust and self-sustained? Why seek to propound this idolizing tenderness, this idealizing admiration? If it be real, true love, nothing can add to or take from its adoration and fondness, and if it be a passion based on any mean desire, time will dissolve it like a snowball. Let us say no more of vows until we have grown in love; until there is no twos, only one life in duplicate forms; until we realize we are all through and through twin spirits; until you can hold me to your bosom, and in face of witnessing heaven say I am the only woman you ever loved or can love, the only one who will for ever sit enthroned as queen on your manly affections both objectively and subjectively.'

Rosa was deeply moved, and although she spoke in low, subdued tones, strong emotion made her shake and tremble. The very centre of her feeling was aroused, and floating mists overspread her vision; and like one in a trance, she gazed around on the beauty of outward nature, and like the wailing echo of an exhausted storm, echoing in the hollow of an ancient ruin, she heard deep, husky tones saying:

'Great, good Power, who overrules the destinies of nations and individual men, Thou confoundest the wisdom of the arrogant, and catchest the cunning in their own snare. So even now, in my joy and hope, the follies of my youth are hunting me down, and hemming me in with their just reward. The gall is returning in increased bitterness. Rosa, beloved, what do you mean? These are strange sayings—deep, meaning words. Are you drawing on mere imagination, and in fancy building a possible future? or are you hinting at some vague suspicion, some slander of which I am ignorant? Ah me, I am growing mad! I see pale faces mocking me—ghosts sitting on the branches of trees, and grinning in the long grass like hissing serpents. Pity me, Rosa, for I feel the whirling torture of conscious insanity. My poor melting brain is unable to bear the burning pressure of my fierce love. Between my heaven and hell there is but a thin partition. In turn pure and impure spirits possess me. Why is it? I must be either mentally or morally insane. If we are free, why are we not free? Freedom to do good gives dignity and joy; freedom to do evil makes us crawl like snakes, writhing in misery and disgust. Ah, it is the past! the past seems for ever coming like a crushing, avenging foe. Merciful God, the past! It ever stands before me, an uncashed insolvency. The past! am I never to be done with the past? When all else seems visionary and vague, it ever remains a bleak, barren reality. Rosa, dear, dear Rosa, I am mad. Did you never fancy I was possessed of some spirit? Ah, I know you have seen the wild fire of insanity in my eyes, and felt its fury and desperation in my torturing grasp; but your soft presence chases the evil spirit away. One look of these deep-blue heartsease eyes becalms my entire nature, and at your feet I sit clothed and in my right mind. Now I am weary of the strife, and sweet, sweet influence, let me once again hold you to this torn heart; once, only once, let me drink in the dews of your sweet lips. Rosa, I yearn for your love as the parched earth for the rain and the dew of summer.'

Like twin spirits of despair they clung to each other, and Vance's ardent kisses extracted her whole soul. All her love and life passed to him, and from that time she only found herself beating in all his thoughts and feelings. How the interview of mutual confession would have ended, had not some of the party suddenly come in view, it is difficult imagining. Sometimes a mere word, or stifled impulse, or careless look, or thoughtless laugh creates a future of untold misery.

Before Rosa could offer one word of hope or comfort to her excited lover, four or five of their number were almost upon them, and Miss Clayton, leaning on the Major's arm, whispered, 'Rather dramatic-looking. To say the least, it is novel; and if I mistake not, both have been weeping, or eating some herb that has made them rather watery about the eyes. Perhaps they have been feasting on sour apples. What a handsome pair, or rather a beautiful contrast! Excuse me, Major, but I have always an eye to the artistic. Even at a funeral, let alone a love episode in an unfrequented retreat, I have an eye for the beautiful and touching. Look, what a contrast!—the lady delicate and surpassingly beautiful, and clinging in tender confidence; and Adonis tall, stout, severe in intensity of love, and noble in majesty, bearing her up in praying agony to the very gate of heaven. Ah! it is too bad thus recklessly intruding on such a sacred scene. It is evident there have been tears, vows, kisses, embraces, and all the nameless joy and agony of mutual love. I beg your pardon, Major, what have I said offensive that you look so black? Surely you, in turn, are not going to be tragical. I dislike scenes, and had fancied a man like you, who had been in forced marches, and the damp, miry marshes of the battle-field, could have stood the sight of weeping love. Surely Rosa's golden curls and flashing intellect have not bewitched you? Men don't lose colour and tremble for nothing. What a pity I have not a small, pouting mouth, dimpled chin, and heartsease eyes!'

'You are far too sharp and ironical for an old soldier,' the Major said, endeavouring to smile, and rise superior to his inward rebellion. 'I am not practically acquainted with such scenes as you have been describing, and which we rather rudely violated, and I confess I did feel at disturbing the soft cooing of two happy doves. Another thing, so much superior female society as I have enjoyed of late is in itself sufficient to upset any barrack bachelor. Perhaps your dove eyes may be as soul-thrilling as confiding heartsease blue.'

Miss Clayton bowed to the soldier's compliment, and in a few moments all parties were equal for the occasion. Outward composure, however, did not in any degree take from the smart, cutting pain which darted in the heart of the undeceived Major. It was not the first sad disappointment he had encountered and combated; and one consolation remained—if the day had no hope or pleasure, the morrow could give no new pain.

Three days after the picnic he called at Mrs. Aslawn's to say good-bye. Rosa had slipped from his embrace, and in a few manly words, made deep with emotion, he told her his love, and how impossible it was for him to remain in the neighbourhood and see her loved and won by another. He had been her father's friend, and in girlhood

she had sat on his knee, fondling his luxuriant brown whiskers, then whitening with the chill of time; and when he rose to depart, she walked with him to the garden gate.

'Dear Major,' she said, as he prepared to leave her, 'think kindly on me for my dear father's sake. Think often on me; and should an ill-fated love, as you call it, blast my life, duty will ever be my watchword, and performance of the same will bear me up. Yesterday I knew nothing of this love and parting, but in all our life we will be dear, helping friends. As you recede, I feel part of my life ebbing away. In all your joy or sorrow, success or defeat, I will ever remain your tender friend.'

In token of agreement he held her for a moment to his breast, and when he tore himself away she went under a great willow-tree and wept.



CHAPTER XXXVI.

POLLY SMITH.

IT was the last month of 1860, and the face of nature was overspread with misty gloom, and wintry winds struck their deepest notes to chant the requiem of the dying year.

'Dear lady, it is easy dying in winter. It is just like falling asleep to wake up at the time of the putting forth of buds, and the singing of birds, and the blossoming of primroses, with a long summer of eternity lying before,' Polly Smith said, while sitting propped in a clean, comfortable bed, gently ebbing out her remains of physical existence, and narrating in broken snatches part of her past life, and ever pausing to intermix some philosophic conclusion of life in general detail. Naturally she was a deep, poetic thinker, and could not by any means sketch out the mere dry outline of events, but always caught the spirit of joy or sorrow, wisdom or folly, underlying the action. She appeared to be about thirty-five years old; and the delicate tints of disease lent her wasted countenance more than youthful beauty. Her glossy black hair was smoothly braided over her broad, intelligent forehead, and her hands and neck were even whiter than her nightdress. The weird, wild expression of desperate despair had entirely disappeared, and her pale face was all beautified with the reflecting haloes of opening immortality. A more perfect and expressive nose could not be imagined; and her magnificent black eyes shone like radiant stars reflecting back the ineffable emanations of nearing deity.

'I always find you full of beautiful poetic resignation,' Rosa replied. 'In winter, certainly, the earth is less inviting, and even the healthful look eagerly forward to the coming of summer. However, I confess I am not so far advanced as you in spiritual resignation. Life has yet many charms and unfulfilled hopes for me; and I often think it must be a fearful thing to say adieu to all familiar things and objects, and to feel the vital breath, intact with the spirit of a wonderful individuality, slipping away like a thin vapour of mist, or to feel it drawn, by a force we cannot resist, away among new surroundings and new society, to begin a new life of unlearned activities. A great many pious people speak as fluently of dying as one would of a holiday trip to some familiar spot of earth; but I look forward to it with conflicting emotions. However, I have no slavish fear of death; but the awful solemnity of parting with our dear old body and this glorious planet of material beauty, and passing

on to meet the untold mysteries of the future, makes me awfully afraid lest I do not live sufficiently noble. It is easy dying when we have lived as we ought; and I seem to feel I must leave dying alone, and take to do with living. Our life here is grand and solemn; and there is so much to love, save, educate, pity, pardon, and redeem, that I often find myself wishing to live down here on earth a long, long time. I can never fancy myself growing old, and I so wish to see and labour for better times—that is, for more righteous governments, and more spiritual religion, and less exclusive selfishness—that I will rather remain on the battlefield than rest with a crown.'

'It is the very nobleness and heroism of generosity that makes you so love this lower scene of mean selfishness and dead indifference to all that is beautiful and holy,' the invalid said. 'Earth has indeed need of you; but its old murderous superstition will deal you many a back stab. When the pulses of physical life are full and strong, and hope and love fair-faced and wooing, we feel death impossible—in fact, cannot imagine why people take ill and give up the ghost. Then our life, like our love and hope, is strong, and we seem to hold it as we may. All, however, is entirely changed when some fell power has blasted the all of our life and slain our soul, and when disease and corroding disappointment have eaten great holes in the vital organs of our being, and the poor disorganizing body is incapable of bearing up its inner burden of suffering life. Then, my lady, we wonder how we live, and, like a mountain eagle confined in a narrow cage, we beat about for escape. In all cases to die is gain; but I believe your very love of life is an inspiration to sustain you for some special work you only can accomplish. We speak of law, and in these times even prayer can only be answered by fixed reflex laws; but it is surely equally reasonable and lawful for the great Lawgiver, who has a general law in creation and nature, to have bye-laws for exceptional purposes and special persons. Of course, science in these times affirms that the cause of nature must live and move like the outward phenomenon of material things; but I believe every one who heroically sets himself to accomplish a righteous work lives and moves under the special agency of God. Therefore, I say, love earth, and labour to bless it; for there are thousands such as I was, sitting like rats and owls in black ruins, driven mad by the canting pharisaism which uses the name of Jesus to increase its selfish love of sinful indulgence. Labour on; and when your work is done you will grow faint with desire to depart, and when you lay you down, overcome by mortal weakness, you will see your Father's house as distinctly as you see the evening star. It is not, however, given to the rapt spirit standing on the margin of eternity to find words or a language wherewith it can define its experiences. Now I see and hear that which makes me swim in ecstasy, and a sort of sacred silence fills the wondering spirit. It is mercy that in our time of earthly work God draws a veil over the unseen. He hides the glory that we may attain the grace, or its dazzling splendour would make us lose all relish for this severer scene. It may be you have yet much to suffer, to endure, and overcome. Your nature makes you feel keenly and sympathize deeply; and the way to God and truth is ever a narrow

one, and in all ages all who walk therein pass to glory through much trial and hard cross-bearing. While one taint of evil lurks in humanity, all heroes, all reformers and redeemers, will climb to God with garments dyed in blood. When I ascend to my Father, I will pray Him to send you still more strength; for not one hoary ruin of bigotry and superstition will fall until the hammer of the Divine Spirit rends it in twain, and not one door of wisdom will open save to earnest knockers. Now the spirit of truth is abroad in the hearts of men, blowing on dead dogma and soulless observances of days and sacraments; and the very life of Christ, and not His blood and cruel death, is the redemption of the world. In all your day you will require to wrestle with spiritual darkness and persecution in high places, for these are times of universal upheaving, and both civilized and barbarous nations will meet and crash in a bloody struggle for liberty and right. If ever there was a time to be chivalrous, to be heroic, to be daring and distinguished, it is now, for the deep-toned wail of the human soul is for more light, more love, more charity, more spiritual purity, and more freedom. The enfeebled body is seeking purer gases and better food, and great swimming-baths, and houses with large windows and back greens; and the excited, enfeebled brain is longing for robust literature and more time to study; and a mighty host of down-trodden women and half-civilized barbarians, both at home and abroad, are groaning for juster governments, both national and international; and hungry street arabs, and fallen waifs of both sexes, are grinning at our pharisaism, our intolerance and indifference; and with these the great unemployed are surging and boiling for civil war; and all commerce and industry is snorting and labouring under depression, and in speculative desperation opening badly-constructed bridges, and murdering human beings as lawlessly and recklessly as the poacher ensnares hares. Therefore, you who are in advance and pioneering the way, must be mighty in faith and heroism, for the shadows of coming events are on the dial of time. The seal of tradition, of superstition, of doctrine and dogma, is closed; the times of war and injustice are on the wane; and the Lord God, the King of righteousness, is coming to heal His people.'

The faint invalid paused, overcome by physical exhaustion, and Rosa hastened to revive her with cordials and tender sympathy. Precious sayings had been dropping from her lips like honey from the honey-comb. In a hard, severe school she had been taught wisdom and understanding. Rosa could not realize she was dying; she had grown to love her, and to lose such a wise friend was a sad privation.

'Now that my strength is returned, I wish to fulfil the promise I made to you, to reveal the leading events of my past history,' the invalid continued. 'Mystic voices tell me this is our last interview. Dear lady, do not start and weep, I am so weak, and my earthly house is so disorganized that I may haste away while speaking. Such being the case, you will excuse me for rather abruptly presenting you with this small locket, inside of which you will find a miniature likeness of myself and dear child. For dear Daisy's sake more than mine, I beg of you to accept and prize the simple relic. Now that my race is run, I must leave it, and something seems to tell me the redeemer of the mother may yet

meet and bless the child. Do not open it now, as I could not bear the least comment. If you ever love fondly, truly, and madly as I have done, you will then know how awfully sad it is to be forsaken and left to perish by him you have enshrined as the embodiment of all manly excellence. It may be you will yet meet that lovely girl, who will now be in her tenth year, and who, I have reason to believe, is far removed from all social privations. We are, however, all linked together in the infinite heart of God, all citizens of one kingdom, and sometimes, as in our case, strange unions take place. My history, common enough in some events and details, is yet intensely uncommon because of the individuality which struggled in and through these events. History is said to repeat itself, but there are a great many popular sayings not worth much when criticized impartially. History, save in the physical phenomena of material nature, can never repeat itself, simply because no two men or women ever thought, felt, and acted alike, even under likeness of circumstances; and each era of time has its own maxims, manners, inventions, and forms of legislation. Again, love is said to be life, but my love slew every feeling of joy and hope within me. Dear lady, I loved as few can, not wisely, but too ardently and faithfully, and my error and death-blow was in yielding too much to my love. With an enlightenment of mind few possess, and a hatred of sin as ardent and intense as my love, I yet was victimized; and if God did not regard it as sin, society considered me outside its walls of respectability. I offer no plea, no justification for my offence; I simply loved too nobly and truly, and for my great hunger and sacrifice I merely got a stone. You may believe no second-rate man could ever have commanded a surrender of my proud, adoring heart. Perhaps I was too proud and self-reliant. I was a governess in a distinguished French family. The father had twice married, and I taught the young family of the second wife. I am of Scotch descent, and have a few respectable relations in the north of Scotland. The son of the first wife was a man some six or seven years older than I was; and although he moved in the highest society and was immensely wealthy, he set his eye on me, and by every opportunity, in and out of season, he was my shadow. It may seem silly, but I was beset with strong temptation; and after I learned to love him, my ruin was easy and speedy. To his credit, I will say, he loved me fondly; but he had not completed his thirtieth year, and his proud parents set themselves to defy his affection. He might have carried his own way, but cowardly submission to public opinion was stronger than his heroism. Thus between us a gulf opened, and my fiery, unbending spirit would not listen to any by arrangements. My lover was very handsome, very intelligent and agreeable in manner, with a power of attraction few could resist. I believed he would abide by me even if the earth shook with anger; and when he began prudentially planning and arranging to keep me in subjection to the injustice of conventional iniquity, I fled—fled in the dead of night like one bereft of reason. I had a little money saved, and for years I hid myself and child far from him and all I had ever known. By and by grief broke alike my heart and my physical health, and when disease and want rendered solitude a horrid waste, for the sake of my child I wrote

to its father. In the midst of disease and want, Daisy was huddled like a crushed flower, and to think she would play and sing beside the cold lifeless skeleton of her murdered mother, was a thought I could not endure. Her father replied by return, saying he was ready to endeavour to redeem the past. I would not meet him. I dared not stoop to let him see the horrid wreck his cowardly unmanliness had wrought. Thinking I had but a few days, or at most weeks, to live, I sent him Daisy, and told him my face he would never see in life. O God! what I then suffered in separating from my darling child! I know I went mad, and when I was myself again, I was in a hospital in London. The unconsciousness of madness was heaven, but sanity and a degree of restored health was infinite torture. When we wish to die, misery seems to lend immortality, and death, like a sneaking coward too mean to confer a favour, retires in the shade to gloat over deeper anguish than physical pain. The hell of hell is lifeless, loveless existence, struggling with its awful mystery of immortal consciousness. When I found I could not die, I cried out for Daisy, my beloved Daisy, and on every breath of wind I fancied I heard her calling for her lost mother. Oh, my child, my child! what she then suffered away among strangers I will never know until we meet in yon fair home where there is no evil and no sad parting. I know God is watching over her, and that her father will possibly spoil her with too much indulgence. Nevertheless, that does not satisfy me. Even now I dare not linger over her beloved memory. Daisy, beloved Daisy! oh that I could have one kiss at that dear child, and bless her before I go hence and be gathered with the dead! Daisy, a mother's love must be God's love, for your memory is engraven in the inner coil of my soul, and I am still yearning for you, and refusing to be comforted. Now, even now, I am yearning for the sunshine of your smile, still fancying I am hearing your childish feet pattering to and fro, still hearing your humming song, and the lingering echo of your chattering accents and merry laugh. Daisy, darling, you are part and parcel of my life, and my joy in heaven will be incomplete until I fold your glorified form to my saintly bosom, and feel the warm kiss of new-born immortality, and behold the halo of perfect happiness encircling you with the radiance of rapt ecstasy!

Only a faint trembling sigh, only a sad sweet smile, and a feeble quiver of the compressed lips, and Polly Smith lay like a marble statue, cold and still.





CHAPTER XXXVII.

LOVE, THOU ART MY SECOND SELF, AND I THY HAUNTING SHADOW.

WHEN Rosa left the house of death, she had only turned the lane when Monsieur unexpectedly confronted her. 'What, you here and at such a time?' she replied to his gallant salute. 'This meeting is indeed strange. *You* seem to have sprung from the teeming earth. How came you to trace me to this locality?'

'You know I am your shadow, and the eager yearning of love conceives rapidly, and as rapidly invents ways and means to accomplish its object,' he gaily replied. 'You will, however, be even more astonished, when I tell you I am familiar with all your mission rounds. *All is fair in love* that does not take a mean advantage, and I confess to having again and again followed you from house to house, waiting like a faithful dog at street corners. Now that I have made a clean breast, I trust the reward will be forgiveness and increase of favour; even if you condemn my fond dotage, all will not have been lost, as I have gained a deal of useful information, and have discovered that if we would be wise, we must study men and women, and commingle with them, instead of isolating ourselves among books and the solitudes of woods. Ah! what is wrong? you look as if you had been weeping. Has anything unusual happened? How wearied and faint you look! Do take my arm, and while you lean heavily on it, tell me the reason of your tearful anxiety.'

Rosa did not answer, but passively accepted the offered arm, and walked on absorbed in deep reflection. With all her experience, she had seen almost nothing of the actual appearance of death, and the sudden change, and the awful majesty of the still, cold face of Polly Smith, made her reflective mind grapple anew with the mystery of life.

'Are you angry, darling, because I have thus followed as a sort of watch-dog?' he inquired, feeling hurt at her silence.

'Women, as a rule, are more flattered than offended by such devotion,' she replied; 'and I fear I am no exception to the rule. However, I confess your appearance took away my breath. What could I think, when I thought you and Henry had gone for a day's sport on the Haddington estate?'

'I think it is the poet Burns who says, "The best-laid schemes of mice and men gang oft a-gley,"' Monsieur said, smiling pleasantly as he drew her arm farther into his.

'That is indeed a true saying,' she remarked. 'When we set out in life we fancy it is a beautiful thing, and that so long as we feel nobly and love purely, all will be as we wish. As we journey on, however, we find it hard for the sensitive, the noble, and pure. Almost anything wins success but nobleness of character, and our faithful performance of duty is met with a thousand clashing oppositions. They only are wise who neither seek in this life pleasure nor reward, but who heroically accept pain and suffering as the food of heaven, which imparteth immortality. To be good and do good, and sit in lonely dignity, indifferent alike to the smile and frown of society, is the state of feeling I would fain attain to.'

'I fear neither philosophy nor Christianity can lend such exalted composure,' Monsieur replied. 'However, I believe if we got people to believe we are invulnerable at every point, we would receive less opposition in our work. Unnatural although it be, a great many find their supreme pleasure in inflicting pain. If we ventured to call such murderers, they would stare with horror. Yet in reality they cut and tear with the vulture talons of slander and fanatical bigotry like furious fiends. Therefore, I say, the submissive heroism that can stand serenely amid the decay of all earthly hopes; can smile on false friendship, and say heroically to earth and hell, Play on, have out your all of barren evil,—for it strikes as vainly as the furious waves around the foundation of a great rock,—is a standard of goodness which makes me bow in reverent awe.'

'Perhaps it is impossible never to murmur and complain,' Rosa said; 'yet I think it possible to stand erect amid the most scorching flames. Somehow, I often feel a sort of foreshadowing of a time when I shall discover all my friends are but hay and stubble, when even my love will vanish like morning mists, and I will stand alone, with heaven above and truth in my heart. A truce, however, to this sad forecasting; the day is ours, and only in work is there profit. I see clouds on your brow, so we will change the subject. By the bye, you have not told me what brought about the change in your plans. I fancied you and Henry were away before aunt. When I left the house, no one was in save the housemaid.'

'All that is true, *ma chère amie*,' he said; 'Henry and I did leave before Mrs. Aslawn. The moment, however, that Mr. Hamilton let me know the august lady was out for a day, I at once absented myself from the shooting company. The old lady seems suspicious I am after bearing you away, and there is little opportunity for us having any private conversation. Hence the reason of my anxiety to embrace the present. However, I am not going to tell you all the planning and scheming I had to manage this precious meeting. Seeing I have confessed to being your watch-dog or haunting shadow, I am now to tell you I have actually been at the door of the attic of that wonderful dying astronomer. What a remarkable man he must be! As we increase in years, we daily find real life far more strange and thrilling

than mere fiction. According to the astronomer, our death hour is the dawn of resurrection life—that is, that in reality there is no such a thing as death, simply the inspiration of more glorious life, and that our orthodox ideas of a great general judgment and resurrection of the dust are simply superstition and false doctrine. When one thinks with unbiassed judgment, it appears to me what the aged seer affirmed is perfectly reasonable, as well as profound in spiritual soundness. God never loses sight of any individuality of life, and all life must be clothed upon by form in harmony with its inherent feelings and faculties, and likewise with a constitution adapted to the elements and exigencies of the regions to which it is called. Therefore, I believe with your friend that we carry within us in this life the germ or embryo of our resurrection body; that the decay and destruction of the mortal will be the birth or resurrection morning of the immortal; and that our main business here is to live well, and God will take care of our dying. Orthodoxy, however, takes most to do with dying, and securing a place in a special heaven for a special number; but that preacher of righteousness reverses the creed, and says, Never give dying a thought, but strain every faculty, feeling, and energy to live noble, heroic, self-denying lives.'

'The dear astronomer is indeed a wonderful man, one sent out from God,' Rosa replied. 'His power and wisdom is divine inspiration. He is greater and grander far than all mere learned or educated excellence, and his pre-eminent greatness is the outcome of daily communion with the Eternal Source of all purity and goodness. However, you are more and more bewildering me with your confessions. When you were so near as listen to our conversation, you might have introduced yourself, and given us the additional benefit of your contribution of intelligence. The astronomer is a rare converser, and so far as my experience guides me, it appears as if the grand art of conversation was fast dying out. Men and women now-a-days either gabble like noisy turkeys, or lisping, nip over or distort words so stupidly, that sitting in a fashionable assembly seems like a confusion of tongues. However, again advertng to your confession, did it not appear to you as you picked up useful information, that you were taking a mean advantage?'

'If I heard aright, in one of those planets or great worlds floating, or rather sweeping, in the grand galaxy of shining constellations, the astronomer finds the future abode of all who are daily migrating from earth,' Monsieur remarked, taking no notice of Rosa's last remark. 'The march of human enlightenment, and the scientific discoveries of our age, are indeed revealing many wonderful facts, and when superstition gives way to reason and reverence, these discoveries will raise the human soul up out of dead conformity to tradition, into newness of spiritual life, and give to each the will and privilege of direct communion with God; and the network of railway, and the flashing speed of electricity, are gathering, as it were, all nations into one, foreshadowing a time when these discoveries, and the inspiration of our prophets, will enable after generations to be more wise and blessed, and in a measure able to trace the very pathway of the soul's migration to a world of more perennial life. The present distance, indistinctness, and

unreality which seem to enshroud the future of humanity, and its exit from this stage of being, are, I am inclined to think, entirely owing to ignorance and enslaving superstition, whose systems of theological doctrine have hung like mill-stones round the spiritual instincts and aspirations of the soul. The truth is, if soul or life must be clothed upon by visible form, whereby to manifest or express its powers of being and doing, form must also of necessity have locality, and real conditions of life, wherein to develop its ceaseless activity or ever onward evolution of more perfectness. Again, your friend has no faith in the doctrine of a great general judgment, and final burning up or dissolving of this planet called earth; on the contrary, his discoveries are all hopeful and healthy. The farther he dives into the immensity of nature, the more he finds it surrounded by life-sustaining power; and what some call mere empty space, he unfolds as a vast reservoir of renewing life forces and elements, and that the great Upholder of all is for ever creating or evolving anew all that has a form, place, and mission in nature; and that not only in ancient time (long before the historic man), but even now, every morning, God is calling all very good, and the morning sons of light chanting the holy anthem. Thus for ever earth will remain the nursery of life, ever improving with human progress. In short, he believes that all planets, once crystallized and poised in the cycles of physical law and order, exist in an equal give-and-take reciprocity, or, in other words, are throwing off spare efflorescence, and absorbing at the same time fresh liquidized elements of perennial restoration; that seeming diminution of heat in one part is increase in another, and that the end of all is an over-soul or over-balance of floating gases, which are drawn together into fresh phenomena of light and heat. Rosa, when I thus reason, I think all my narrow Romanism appears like barbarous babbling, and the general want of faith in a real, personal, good God, and knowledge of Him, the power which is keeping us in bondage to evil. One thing is certain, such beliefs and such knowledge glorify our entire nature, unite us to God as children, and clothe our earth with more transcendent glory, and lend to human life a dignity, meaning, and solemn grandeur which awe with reverence while they inspire with strong faith. Another thing, such spiritualizing of astronomy foretells a time when all science will be consecrated to righteousness and religion (not one or many systems of creeds and confessions, and a mere commercial profession, whereby all forms of dishonesty and uncleanness are committed), the attitude of the soul in its daily and hourly converse with man and God. The truth is, such a man is an honour to his country, and a saviour of humanity; but, alas! all countries disgrace themselves by allowing such men to die in narrow garrets of poverty and neglect. Will the time ever come when genius and true inspiration will be seen, believed in, and accepted before the mad yell of prejudice, superstition, and religious fanaticism hunt the torch-bearer to death? Would that my beloved France, famed in all art, and supreme in none, had a few such men! Deny it as we may, all European nations seem languishing for a revival in literature. The back-bone is going out of our poetry, our philosophy, and social and political science. We might not like

it; nevertheless, we are sorely in need of earnest, able, withering criticism, to blow on our patch-work, bargain-making theology, our mawkish morality, our professional philanthropy, and our beastly rowdyism, barbarous partyism, and egoism in legislation. Soon for France, I trust, will dawn the truer light; soon may the time come when she will be too great for blustering of military greatness, but, turning her swords into instruments of art and industry, be in reality the mother of true civilization and the centre of commerce. In the past, crowns of blood might be and were worn with proud triumph by semi-barbarous monsters, by imperialized robbers, whose ruling passions were sensual lust, greedy aggrandisement, fiendish oppression, and weak pandering to an unscrupulous priesthood, who ventured to reduce God to man's vain imaginings, and to manufacture religious frauds in His name. We are, however, arrived at or nearing times when the governments and crowned rulers of all civilized nations will vie with each other in wisdom, righteousness, forbearance, and charity, and work together in bringing in the heathen and more benighted and rent asunder nations and tribes by a unity of earnest amity. War is perfectly preventable, and under all circumstances a blunder and mistake. Therefore an international government should be established to deliberate wisely on all international disputes, and be empowered to compel disagreeing powers to arrange their disputes according to right, and based on the most enlightened principles of righteous justice. The laws of nature and the laws in the human constitution, as well as the evidence of all history, attest that not by might but by the righteousness of love and charity is goodness conserved and evil overcome. I fear, however, that many rounds of shot and shell must yet brand the christianized man a monster, and his religion, or belief in it, a lie and a failure, before the majority of the people are educated so as to support unbroken cycles of true, righteous, progressive legislation. It appears to me that on all sides the war rabble in more countries than one are waxing noisy and thirsty for blood. Why? because the moment the Tory or monarchical adventurer feels losing ground, these subtly hint at the danger of undermining crown prerogative, of waning imperial glory, of the fearful results springing out of republic anarchy, and the danger of pulling down time-honoured laws and institutions; and the weak, the selfish, the ignorant, and fanatical, mistaking the true meaning of the cunning insinuation, throw reflection and common sense to the wind, and afresh putting Christ to shame, shoulder the musket and cry, Away with God's Son, and stand up for kings, queens, and political swindlers! and menace the poor, excitable barbarian, dragging him into an unequal war, for the sole purpose of stealing his cattle and long tracts of land. By and by, however, the gulled masses discover that war abroad is simply trade stagnation and starvation at home. In a word, find they were entrapped, and that low diet breeds disease; and that money squandered in shooting men and women, burning houses and children, and trampling under foot the precious fruits of the earth, is not only lost, but spent in declaring that Satanic devilism and godless monstrosity are greater and diviner than the morality Christ taught and declared was of God. However, a little more reckless adventure, a little more Tory rowdyism, lying,

cheating, murdering, starving, and putting on of heavy taxes and burdens on the poor, and the people will learn true wisdom, learn from a bitter experience to make elections sure results of principle and steady progression, instead of what they are now, rabble scenes of fiendish partyism, weak yielding to intimidation, silly caprice, sectarian prejudice, and religious intolerance. A more independent press, healthier literature, and the equalization of the city and county franchise, will, as regards your country, make elections foregone results, and not mere chance innings (like some pastime game). Ours is a vaunting, pretentious, mawkish, negative age, full of units of monstrous egoism. Nevertheless, in one sense it is almost destitute of true individualism, the reason being every one claims to be informed and enlightened, who has a smattering of all knowledge, but in reality has no real knowledge of anything. Save in steam and electricity invention, we have few high priests and prophets, and may be said to be in a state of transition. On every side men and women are losing faith in the assumed infallibility of religious dogma, and letting go, one by one, the rotten planks of tradition; and it may take a long time before this new school of thought and inspiration is sufficiently strong and individualized to draw the wavering masses around more divine and more righteous institutions and organizations. While humanity is, and man a social being, belief in some form, both civil and religious, will be necessary. Therefore we are only setting out for the highway, only realizing the need of less dogma and more righteousness, less form and more devotion to sacredness and purity of conscience; only beginning to hunger after the God-Father, and to have less fear of the wrathful Judge; just beginning to dream of love and to forget hate; and anticipating the fearful fact that the devil is within humanity, and not away in the depths of darkness, preparing a huge furnace wherein to burn the non-elect. Which nation will be first in moving on the lines of righteousness? Perhaps France, so beautiful for situation, so ingenious in invention, so sprightly in spirits, so gallant in manners and heroic in war, will first forget all old revenge, fretting, cancerous jealousy, and forsaking all vainglory and flimsy military ambition, take the lead in justice, liberty, righteousness, and peace. Rosa, forgive me, but France is engraven on my hands. I love your country because I love my own. Night and day my cry to heaven is for France, for her emancipation from all error and evil. Once she dethrones priestcraft, and will have nothing to do with the cruelty and degradation of Cæsarism,—when she honours free-thinking for all that it gives to the graces of humanity, and prostrates its soul before something diviner than blank atheism, Victor Hugo, that mighty seer, that rapt poet, that humble child of God, nay, flash of God-inspiration, will see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. Then France will become the true mother of civilization, and the centre of art and commerce. I believe the future of France is great and good, and that she will have a Church in which the holy Author of life will delight to dwell,—a Church whose songs and hymns angels might long to chant,—a Church the beauty of whose art we can but barely imagine, and a society whose manners and morals will be holiness.

Monsieur's eyes shone like stars with the reflection of his enthusiasm,

and his whole soul seemed swallowed up in a luxury of desire to bring about the realization of his vision. However, in all the world he could not have found a more rapt and sympathetic listener, a more kindred philanthropist than Rosa. She lauded his every fond hope, believed in his lofty ideas; and while gazing with admiring fondness into his transformed face, called him her king, hero, and saintly priest, daily offering to heaven the sweet-smelling sacrifice of an earnest, blameless life.

'In all your ideas and aspirations I fully agree,' she replied. 'It matters little which country lead, the one desideratum is that some of them begin in all earnestness. Looking through the mists of intervening ages, I can see the certain coming of a time when human society shall have become the kingdom of God, and such a future will be the outcome and uniformity of the course of events, and the design of the Great Builder. The history of humanity thus far, in its oneness of desire in all systems of religion, both before and since the Christian era, indicates that, in some rude, mystical, or ascetic forms, the aspirations of the soul have been for the peace, repose, and beauty of righteousness. Therefore, when we rightly interpret history, when we learn aright the lessons of nature, when we sound the silent deeps of unuttered yearning, and when we prostrate ourselves before the holiest within us, and feel the God-life of the universe flowing into our opening, expanding spirits, we realize there is a noble, blessed future for man and for the world—a future the healthful beauty of which only the learning and poetry of such a time can in some degree express.'

'I am indeed encouraged to hope and work by your kindred sympathy and suggestive wisdom,' Monsieur replied. 'Nay, you are in very deed my inspiring angel. Since I knew you, and caught the inspiration of your genius, the ideas of my brain, before chaotic and unformed, have taken shape, and a great, intense desire for action has taken the place of sluggish indifference. Would all women were like you! To me, Rosa darling, it appears that the barbarous ignorance that subjected women, and the ignorance of women in submitting meekly and foolishly to such subjection, has thrust barbarous nations into the rude, inhumane condition in which we find them, and that in civilized countries such subjection has dwarfed their influence, rendered religion and morality polished links of corruption, and taken the heroism and backbone out of our manhood. Think of it as we may, not until woman is universally educated and taught to understand that she has a lost position to regain, taught to realize that society requires her moral purity, mental enlightenment, intelligent and tender sympathy, as well as her many and varied industries and art beauties, will there be aught save spasmodic fits of universal reform. Excuse me, dearest, for wandering so far into generalities, and seeming to ignore or forget your present philanthropic work. Ah! Rosa, it is indeed a joy to me to know you clasp humanity in your bosom, and only live to continue the work Christ began. By the bye, how is your saintly, patient sufferer, Polly Smith? Strange, I have again and again dreamt troubling dreams of that woman. If you are to visit her to-morrow, I will be honoured by your taking me with you.'

'I often wished you to see Polly,' Rosa said, 'but did not like to ask you to accompany me. Her appearance would have arrested you, so handsome, so beautiful, wise, and divinely sanctified in a seven times heated furnace of fearful suffering. Now, however, you are too late in making known your desire. Polly has gone home, and is now for ever independent of all our sympathy and cold charity. How awfully grand and godlike she was in her lonely scorn, sitting a defiant queen amid rags and filth, feeding on the ebbing blood of her broken, starved heart! Dearest Vance, it appears to me that beings who thus suffer and endure are as far removed from us in grandeur and greatness as God is from humanity, and that through all eternity we will never attain to the glory and excellence of Polly Smith. Noble, slain Polly! Ah! she had indeed a hard, withering experience, and her soul has been purified by shedding many tears of blood, and she was made heroic and saintly by enduring the cruellest and vilest wrong a woman can suffer, and by seeking from God no more than she awarded to her enemies.'

So deeply was Monsieur touched by the beauty and pathos of the picture drawn by his beloved of the friendless one, that tears were streaming from his eyes, and a choking sob heaved in his chest. Somehow he longed to look on her dead face, so that the actual and ideal might be for ever engraven on his memory.

'Will you return, darling, and let me have one look at the remains of so much sacrifice and suffering?' he said. 'For some days I have had it in my mind to give her a decent burial. Now we might return and arrange.'

'I have arranged sufficiently for the present, *mon cher ami*,' she replied. 'Just now my pocket-money is not so bare as it sometimes is, thanks to Henry, and I have ordered and paid for the coffin and some other matters. Another thing, at present I could not return to view the sad sublimity of her lifeless body. It is perhaps weakness or morbid sensitiveness on my part, but the appearance of death ever awakens within me a sort of dark, desperate sorrow, a grief which robs life of all beauty and meaning, and awakens a sadness so desolate that I almost wish to cast life away as not worth accepting. Perhaps it is too eager impatience to peer within the all of the future that tends to breed such a feeling. Whatever the reason, these experiences and feelings tell me I am but a poor ignorant child crying and sobbing in the dark, and so timid that I am afraid at every black cloud; so destitute of enlightened faith that I cannot span the narrow breadth of a lifeless body, and see beyond the resurrection of eternal life. By and by, it may be, I will be more heroic, more philosophic, and so enlightened that I will understand that death is but the dawn of new life, the beautiful and essential change enabling the spirit to rise in gradual ascension toward God and likeness to His character.'

'Dearest,' Monsieur said, 'heavenly wisdom drops from your lips like choicest honey. Believe me, your seeming weakness is your divinest strength and sublimest beauty. It is the richness and yearning tenderness of your affection which melts you into a liquid of consuming suffering, and that very love and sympathy renders you almost almighty in power and strength. Your figure of being a poor crying child in the

dark is a beautiful, true saying. Ah! *ma chère chérie*, you are not alone in that feeling. The wisest and most profound are but children spelling out a few indications of the great Father-God, simply tracing a little outline of consistency amid infinitude of mystery too complex and complicated for the energies and powers of any single lifetime; and these have been the most successful and most redemptive thinkers who ever felt like lost children, and yet ever and anon were so near to God and so confident of His aid, that they simply put their hand in His and were led into the light of truth. Even Jesus, the only one who fully retained this child-trust, who alone spanned the infinite distance rolling between humanity and God, and taught after ages to aspire to real son and daughtership, was often overcome by sorrow and suffering, and amid the rabble of hellish bigotry, fanatical superstition, and fiendish hate, and the torture of horrible crucifixion, cried in the dark like a poor lost child. Life, darling Rosa, is a mystery, but it is a grand, glorious mystery, with sufficient revelation and meaning to convince the earnest and reflective that there is completeness and compensation awaiting to perfect every unit and atom of life. It appears to me, the more we feel like children, and the more intense the cry for the Father, the more of purity there will be in our hearts, the more divinity in our wisdom, and the more of heaven's inspiration in our souls.'





CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE LOVERS.

ROSA'S nature was a rare combination of versatile attractions, ever flowing out in rich impassioned feeling, earnest reflection, searching speculative thought, lofty imagination, and reverent meditation; now revelling in poetic imagery, again a studious scientist, closely reasoning out the beauties and wonders of the material universe, and with nice acumen discovering the unity and harmony of material law and arrangement with the more subtle beauty, love, and principles governing the spiritual and mental universe of will, action, affection, instinct, and aspiration. The truth is, Rosa's nature and powers of mind were hard to define; even the refined and learned found her hard to be understood at all her extreme points of thinking and acting. The ceaseless activity of her mind alone was cause of wonder; and the giddy heights of thought into which she scaled, and her varying moods of impassioned feeling, made ordinary mortals simply wonder; and her powers of endurance and superiority to opposition were marvels to herself. Often when appearing most gay and cheerful she was in reality intensely sad, and far away from the present scene of chaos, struggling to find out the true meaning of the huge mysteries of creation. Like Job, she soared in inquiring sublimity of earnestness up into the awful crags of God's self-existing infinitude; like Milton, marshalled the hosts of heaven prior to creation, and revelled in the blessedness of the single pair in Eden; and with Shakespeare descended into the innermost recesses of human passion, and struggled with the subtle, sneaking, crawling thing called evil, as it makes men fouler fiends than orthodox devil. She, too, had times of fearful despondency; but no mystery of inconsistency or suffering could uproot her gigantic trust in God's fatherly love, and no amount of ingratitude or chaotic misery and ignorance erase her almost credulous faith in human goodness, and her belief in its ultimate triumph over all error and evil. In every man and woman, however debased, selfish, or over-crusted by actual iniquity, she found some glimmering of divinity, some longing after a better life, some desire to rebuild the old ruin, and sufficient over-soul of energy once the right spark fired the smouldering mass. If essential, she would toil, pray, suffer, and sacrifice a million years rather than believe in or aid the eternal damnation of one conscious living creature. With all his depth

of insight, Monsieur only knew his beloved in part ; and when they reached home and were reclining amid the ease and elegance of the artistic drawing-room, he was somewhat astonished at her bounding cheerfulness as she descanted with melodious fluency on the flowery or sunny side of life, and seemed while thus conversing to be enjoying the nectar of social blessedness.

'*Ma chère dame*, you are indeed hard to understand !' he remarked. 'Listening to your lute-like voice theorizing on the gay or pleasant side of life, one would never dream you had seen sorrow, and could so sympathize as to drink the anguish of each troubled soul. Even your very countenance harmonizes with your words, for you look bright and beautiful as an opening rose. You are now so like a flower in beauty and the expression of angelic blessedness, that it is hard believing you are the Rosa who ever and anon is in the dark valley, handing over groaning sufferers to the *great majority*, and weeping and questioning beside the mysterious silence of death and the blank inanity of the grave. It is a strength of mind, I confess, I cannot understand, which enables you with a bound to get beyond the region of misery and mystery into the flooding sunlight of thrilling joyfulness.'

'I do not see why you should find me so hard to understand,' she said. 'One thing, I cannot explain how it is. To me it appears natural because it is my nature, and if I could not enter into the joy and beauty of repose, and moments of kindred endearment, I would at once conclude I am only capable of suffering and sympathizing with the sombre and sad. Perhaps there is no virtue in my joying or sorrowing when each aspect of life or expression of nature touches and reacts on me so naturally. It may be an indication of weakness, but my nature is such that it vibrates to every appealing influence. I must weep with the dejected, fight for the oppressed, tear the sword out of the upraised hand of the murderer ; must brand the vile seducer a low, sneaking coward, lashed and ruled by passions he should burn out of his nature by noble aspiration and heroic effort. Likewise the fragrance of a rose in a window recess awakens within me myriad sensations of sweetness and beauty ; and the smile of a happy child, the notes of music, the piping song of birds, the lispings breeze, the balmy zephyrs, the sweeping storm, and the gushing glow of youthful joyfulness make me reel and thrill with indefinable blessedness. Vance, I am often so happy, so mysteriously happy, that I weep with very joy. After all our weak complaining, we have months, nay, years of reposeful joy for every minute of real suffering.'

'Darling, your soul is a complete and comprehensive music-box,' Monsieur replied ; 'and so finely set and high strung that it sings and wails in turn with the universal heart of humanity. To me you are a powerful influence, swaying my entire being with some magic power. At pleasure you change me from grave to gay. In short, you are the life and light of my life. Rosa, let me hold your hand, let me sit very near you, while I devoutly bless heaven for the clear light of your deep-blue eyes. Dearest, your very nature is love, and you are awfully dear to me. I use the word awful because I dread to lose you. I shudder when I imagine the privation. It may be that my passionate adoration

is sinful in sight of heaven, or a sort of possessing insanity. Some affirm that all overmastering passion is a kind of insanity. Whether sane or insane, my love is an overmastering, all-absorbing passion. Only through you can I see beauty, meaning, or joyfulness in life. Of all the indefinable mysteries, I think man's yearning, sad, jealous craving for the love, companionship, and complete possession of a noble, beautiful woman is the most incomprehensible. You have told me, darling, that you love, and that no other shares in your heart's adoration. Yet it appears as if there were plague mists floating between us, and I often fancy that our kisses are more tragic and desperate than sweet and reposeful. Now, however, we are happy, and I must throw all fanciful phantoms away; now we are happy, very happy—so happy that we can scarcely conceive of misery, and so confident that our future seems a very Eden of bliss. Darling, we have made mutual confessions, and sealed these again and again with fond kisses and ardent embraces, yet nothing definite has been arranged. You always seem to avoid being bound to any fixed engagement, and I am haunted with a fear that something happen to separate us. Now, even this minute, promise me to become my wife in a few weeks, so that I can take you with me when this holiday trip is over. Rosa, my life depends on your answer. Dearest, make me completely happy.'

'We are completely happy, Vance dear, are we not?' she said. 'What could happen to separate us? Nothing on my part or my life; and if you have no turned-down pages, no dark spots or wandering accusers, our love is so strong and beautiful that no separation can in the least take from its truth and devotion. Poor, dear aunt, I could not leave her now she is on the margin of eternity. Vance, beloved, *wait a wee*; and this delightful feeling is so exquisite, let us dream on. Let us be lovers for a longer period, it is so unspeakably transporting to find each other in sighs, sweet glances, tender deeds, and fond endearments. Aunt has been a true, tender mother to me, and now when she is old and feeble, I cannot forsake her and seek my own pleasure. I have full confidence in you, and know you can and will sacrifice inclination to our higher duty, and I will adore you as my philosopher, king, hero, and great-souled, true poet, seeing beyond the shadow and symbol into the living soul of silent, endless life.'

'Darling, you overrate me,' Monsieur replied. 'Men cannot sacrifice; their love is far too selfish for divine submission. However, I will try and have sufficient common sense to admit that the love that cannot sacrifice is at heart very weak, and an unsafe reliance for a blessed future. The bare idea or thought of having to return to France without you makes me blind to duty and deaf to reason. You call me your hero and king, but, Rosa, believe me there is no man reaches my age without some turned-down page in his day-book. The truth is, dearest, I often think I am but a poor passion-tossed, dreaming fool. I sit and dream splendid dreams, and build towering castles of imagination, but I sadly lack the fire of energy, the power of determined will, which bends all circumstances into the working out of some noble purpose. I grant you, it is unspeakably sweet the mystic delight of lovers, but we shall remain rapt lovers during all our wedded life. After all, I really think

it is carrying duty too far to resolve to deny yourself so much, and subject me to such cruel privation rather than leave your dear old relative. I fully appreciate your noble devotion to duty, but Mrs. Aslawn will soon find an agreeable and essential companion. Although she is now above the allotted term of mortal life, she is so robust naturally, so strong-minded, and careful in eating and drinking, that I believe she will see another twenty summers. Think of that !

'Nay, Vance dearest, aunt is failing fast,' Rosa replied with trembling emotion, 'every day she is failing, and I cannot leave her. Were I to be so foolish as obey my yearning love, so yielding as to be swayed by your soft pleading, I could not enjoy my happiness while such a memory of ingratitude haunted me. So, *mon cher chéri*, no stranger shall close the dear lady's eyes. Although she looks well, and is, as you say, strong-minded, and prudent in her way of living, and possesses all her faculties unimpaired, she is too sympathetic of soul and earnest of heart for staying much longer amid the chaotic confusion of these restless times. Ah ! I can see her secret tears, her faint trembling, her longing sighs, her anxious excitability ; and the very calmness of her exterior evidences the intensity of her internal commotion. Even if I had chosen an Englishman whose residence would have been in the neighbourhood, I would not have married during her life. Poor aunt is on the very margin of eternity, and I could not give one additional care to the closing days of her who pillowed my head in its orphan childhood. Therefore, dearest, *wait a wee* ; men can sacrifice better than women, especially for their love. Say you will sacrifice, and we will turn poets and write love sonnets. At the longest, you will not have long to wait. Think of Petrarch and Laura, and Jacob and Rachel, and you will find men giants in devotion to a true, noble love.'

'How noble you are, Rosa ! and how admirably you plan, suggest, and shame a man into subjection to reason !' he said, clasping her in a firm embrace, and devouring her with fondest kisses. 'It is indeed sweet, indefinably sweet, this delight of mutual love. What a heaven of deep meaning, of infinite tenderness, is swimming in your beautiful eyes ! But when I think I feel sure of your affection, and especially during our moments of sweetest communion, some tragic event, some strange circumstance, seems to come between us, and I feel you vanishing like a heavenly dream, and the intense feeling of agonizing privation almost makes me cry out. Surely, Rosa, the future will be more merciful to me than the past. It may appear sinful idolatry, but the inspiration of your soul thrills me at my innermost centre, subdues all my lower passions, and raises me into a state of transfiguration and ecstasy. You live poetry, let alone write it, and no language or measures could shadow forth the infinite flow of holy song bubbling in your full-fraught soul. Through and through you are a deep-toned, harmonious anthem. Life in you, around you, and above you, is holy music far more profound and exquisite than all humanized expressions of pathos and passion. Even the present questioning unrest, and the harsh tread of millions on millions of gold seekers and gold worshippers, are to you bass notes of the ever humming psalm of life.'

'How beautiful you speak, Monsieur !' she said. 'After all, there is

nothing in life equal to fluent, intelligent conversation. It makes the very marrow of our soul tingle with budding desire, and sharpens all the faculties of the mind, and enables the affectional nature to bask in the strength and solace of sympathy. We speak of poetry, yet how little we know of what it really is! I do not know if I can write or feel like a poet, but I bow reverently before the influence of its music like a liquid bubble of entranced wonder. It appears to me that poetry is spiritual electricity, and all other verbal expressions but distant or more near sounds struck out from its creating anvil; it is the mystic tube of holy reciprocity, through which ascends and descends the spontaneity of feeling ever vibrating between the great Author of life and all His creatures.'





CHAPTER XXXIX.

A DENOUEMENT.

IF I speak well, you create better,' Monsieur remarked. 'You almost silence me with admiration as you focus the very gems of spiritual life. How skilfully, too, you relate all our personal address with general subjects and everyday experiences! Would some pen spider was in the corner, a silent but recording witness of our interviews, and the reading world would discover that adoring lovers can find expression in philosophy and common sense, and fiction writers might find the romance of real life far more interesting, and infinitely more profitable, than the hackneyed, unnatural plots and monster imaginings which in too many cases are continued to be thrust on wearied supporters of literature! A really original novel would be a phenomenon. However, I wish to embrace this opportunity of explaining a few things concerning self, and trust you will excuse me for thus hurriedly launching into a new field of thought. Last night you threw out some hints anent my fits of moody sullenness, and the soliloquies which you have heard. At this moment it struck me these fits of seeming despondency may be frightening you from reposing complete confidence in me. Now I shall try to explain them, but to you, who for many years, nay, for all your life, have been led by the Spirit past all traditions and theological dogma, my conception of prayer and timidity in approaching God must appear almost unnatural. As you know, part of my religious creed is to pray and offer sacrifice for the departed. On that night which you again and again advert to, I was particularly led away by fond memories and tender voices, and was agonizing in prayer lest some of my absent ones were in any state of suffering in the mysterious silences into which they have passed. Hitherto I have said little of my spiritual experiences and beliefs; but although I am still regarded as an adherent of the Church of Rome, I am now no longer a believer in its flimsy priestcraft, miraculous changing of the body and blood of Christ into the eucharist elements, and the mediation of saints. Nevertheless, it will be a considerable time before I can clear my mind of all these long-cherished delusions and early associations and forms of worship. The life and spirit of your theism, like a warm flood of re-creating power, has shed joy and liberty into my spirit; but the majority of your churches are beastly barns, and your form of worship bare and harsh, and

to such as me almost destitute of reverence. Here, likewise, I take the opportunity of saying that one reason of my long holiday in your country is a deep desire to study your form of government, and how it is supported, so that, if possible, I may carry home with me some useful information that we French may turn into profitable use in guiding and building up the republic party. We have no lack of enthusiasm, or noble spirit of progressive independence, and perhaps have more than enough of desire to be a praise in the centre of civilized nations; but we want calm moderation, steadfast adherence and strong patience, and some more subdued philosophy necessary to educate the too hot-headed, and gradually saturate all classes with nobler views of life and a higher sense of duty one toward the other. However, I find on near approach that you are about as rent and torn as ourselves. Your sectarian differences, hate, jealousy, and rankling envy at first made me aghast with horror. We see little of your orthodox theology, but hear a great deal of your piety and church-going, and have it vaunted all over that your Queen owes all her success at home and influence abroad to the Bible. If such be the truth, alas for the fruits of Bible-popery! Likewise, your social misery and indifference thereto, and mode of giving out a starvation mite to insult real misfortune, and feed and breed indolent pauperism, are wretched evidences of superior wisdom and enlightenment. It may be your morality is more consistent with your Bible religion than ours is; but I am simply appalled at the reckless increase of your population, especially seeing you have nothing to give to hundreds upon hundreds of your children but semi-starvation and all its attendant miseries. We call the man mad who lives above his income; but what shall we say of parents who will deliberately bring into being more children than they can support? This, however, is a question that goes down into the very centre of our moral nature; and if we fail to get men and women to understand that all the passions can be subjected to reason and common sense, and that marriage is something holier far than mere sexual gratification, the future of which we have been speaking, the blessed future of concord, peace, and plenty, will be still very far distant. The weltering classes of all countries require these facts and truths made clear to them; but, alas! in literature we have so few prophets and high priests who can descend into the streets and lanes of our cities, and the literature these struggling ones read and find thrust upon them simply stimulates the already too excited and weakened lower passions, and the monthly tract shocks and chills all reverent devotion. The need is that men and women all over realize that the body is the temple of God, and before each for him and herself realizes such to be truth, they know nothing of the holy exchange of tender feeling between the infinite and finite. Again, I say, if mankind is to attain to the perfection and blessedness we have been dreaming of, it must be by spiritual freedom, moral purity, mental enlightenment, and righteousness of national and international laws. In a word, humanity must transcend itself by aspiring after the perfection of the great Spirit of the universe, and thus complete the work Christ inaugurated by a universal brotherhood of love and charity.'

Rosa listened like one in a dream, eager and intent, lest she lose a

word. To hear one so lately converted from Romanism speak in such a manner of the glorious liberty, and more glorious results of the aspirations of the soul, made her mysteriously joyful. No wonder Monsieur was then, to her, an object of supreme veneration. In him she beheld the deliverer of France, and in all his political and philanthropic enthusiasm she was his twin spirit. Then she was happy, so happy that she was afraid lest the acute vibrations of mystic pleasure snap the main organ of life, and lash her on a rippling wave of bliss on the shore of eternity. Ah! eternity! wide, open expanse! never-setting day! ever-remaining *Now!* great, glorious gift from an almighty, loving God! How she panted for eternity! how she longed for its wide infinitude whereon to develop her pent-up infinity of blessed capabilities! Every morning she thanked the Author of life for eternity; and every evening, as she gazed wistfully on the narrow strand of time as it receded away, like an old toy of childhood, she yet more earnestly thanked Him for the hope and glory of eternity.

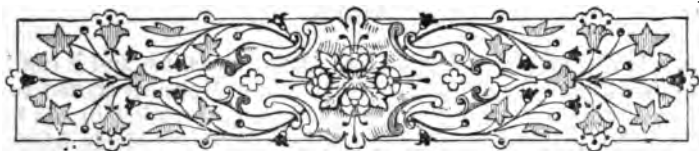
'*Mon cher Monsieur*, I cannot tell you how inexpressibly happy you have made me,' she said, in low, vibrating tones. 'I am happy to know I have been cherishing foolish delusions concerning your sombre moods, and am thrice happy to know your conscience is emancipated from all bigotry and superstition. Vance, dearest! this is indeed an hour of sweet communion, and the very glory of earth seems transfigured. How I have longed for all mystery to be cleared away, and yearned to be freed of all rankling suspicion! And now when you tell me you are spiritually free, and all on fire with a noble ambition, full of a calm, firm purpose and reposeful determination to work for the emancipating of your country from all forms of superstition, materializing atheism, vain trusting in military conquest, and the demoralizing and dangerous influence of an unscrupulous priesthood, I am so happy that I can only cry out, O life, blessed, indefinable luxury! O God, glorious source of mystery and inspiration! O earth, beautiful, sublime expanse of glorified beauty! O love, rapturous pulse of God's mysterious life, the very essence of His infinite life, from whence all His other attributes spring! Once we really love, and are beloved, we only sigh for eternity to complete our wonderful blessedness. Eternity, great abyss of endless continuity, and last, most liberal gift of a loving Father! Truly, the infinitude of eternity is immeasurable; yet love's duration, desires, and capabilities of enjoyment are yet more infinite, and its longings after perfect goodness immensely superior to all mere physical extension of life surroundings and conditions. As real love yearns after and aspires toward the good and true, it gladly welcomes the severe discipline of sorrow, the agonizing mystery of suffering, nay, the very cross of martyrdom, and the dark valley of death, so be that every experience weave out more completely the mystic hues of a perfect mind and soul haloed with the beauty of spotless righteousness.'

Monsieur, equally happy and transported by her suggestive and glowing speeches, caught her again and again in his arms, and kissed her with rapturous fondness, and her returning caresses and sweet smiles told him all he yearned to know. Then they were so completely happy, that language fails to express their emotions, and time

fled over them like a shining, swift-speeding comet, all haloed with the beauty and bliss of heaven.

'Listen, dearest,' Rosa said with spasmodic haste, and a look of blushing confusion which added new charms to her intellectual and almost tragic beauty. 'Oh! dear heaven! that is aunt, and her voice is harsh and husky with some woful excitement. No ordinary circumstance can move my venerable relative either to expression of much outward joy or sorrow, and I know something dreadful has happened. My God, what can it be? Henry, dear Henry, can he have fallen from his horse, and is suddenly taken from us, with his bosom full of kindness, and in the pride of his manhood? Ah! she is coming this way; haste and hide. We are forgetting you left her, promising to be with Henry; quick! follow me, and we shall get to my bedroom unobserved. Not for worlds would I have her think we condescended to plan secret meetings.'

Monsieur at once saw the necessity of doing exactly as his beloved ordered, and, panic struck, he speedily and silently followed, in his heart admiring the quick precision of her exertion to keep his conduct honourable in her aunt's eyes. Monsieur had a conviction that at heart Mrs. Aslawn disliked him, and to have been caught at home holding a closed-door love *l'le-à-l'le* in her absence, while all the time she was led to believe he had gone to the country for field sport, would have been to lower him for ever in her estimation, if not to bring on him instant disgrace. Few words were spoken as trembling Rosa slipped her fugitive lover inside her bedroom, and bade him make the door secure from the inside, and to open to none save herself. A few steps from the door, poor Rosa was confronted by her aunt, and severely blamed for her delay in meeting her distressed relative. Much as Rosa despised all appearance of falsehood, for once she pleaded a lie, saying she had a headache and had been resting. The excuse was at once accepted, and with a deep groan the old lady threw herself in her niece's arms, and the ghastly expression of her face told too plainly something dreadful had happened to destroy the honour and dignity of the ancient house of Anderson. Without a word, Rosa kissed her tenderly, and led her into the richly-furnished drawing-room, and set her on the end of a couch. The sun, shining brightly through the chaste colouring of the handsome silk hangings and pale pink blinds, reflected on a face woful with a ghastlier expression than that of death. Deep, dark rings of hopeless despair were round her sunken eyes, and the rounded, robust figure of the august lady seemed crumpled and shrunken, and a wild, defiant-like glare shone in her bloodshot orbs, as with feverish restlessness they were turned heavenward, as the fiery anguish of her soul sped its incoherent prayers to the throne of Him who rules the destinies of nations and has respect to the sparrow's fall. Poor Rosa's heart stood still; like Job's friends, she felt her aunt's grief was great. When she tried to speak, her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth, and with silent, heart-breaking sympathy, she stood a mute witness of anguish of spirit that appalled her, and with a feeling of horror that the revelation to be made would lash her soul in the same dark ocean of suffering.



CHAPTER XL.

SHADOWS ON THE WALL.

SHORTLY after Monsieur was alone in Rosa's room, he fastened the door, and began surveying every detail and article of furniture, ornament, and painting in his loved one's sanctum with an interest and delight bordering on idolatry. To his impassioned soul it was indeed a sanctuary, a holy retreat, wherein a pure, rapt soul daily held sweet converse with the great Spirit of the universe, and drew from the Father of her spirit the wisdom and divine understanding which rendered her so supremely eminent to the generality of womankind. He felt he was within a hallowed shrine, wherein a tender soul daily travailed in pleading love to raise humanity toward the perfection of righteousness,—a shrine wherein a chaste soul daily bathed in the flooding beams of God's abiding favour, and in free communion inhaled the exhalations of His mystery of life and love; and he bent in tearful adoration, for every corner was to him holy ground. Every way his eye turned, he found the room overlaid with varying expressions of poetic taste, and tokens of loving memories and fanciful tracings of the very soul of beauty, and he moved about like one entranced; and when his eyes lighted on a pair of lavender gloves lying as if to give the exact model of the wearer's hand, he caught them up, and covered them with impassioned kisses. Over the mantelpiece he next bent before an oil painting of his divinity, evidently drawn by some master hand. The canvas seemed to move, for her rosy lips appeared smiling on her rapt lover as he knelt in adoring homage before the mute figure. Surely never man loved and was so beloved; so he thought, as rising he thanked heaven for the precious love of the noble lady whose physical beauty the painter had so successfully transferred to canvas. Again, he had come on a half-worn slipper, and as he hugged it to his fast-beating heart, he revelled in all the luxury of blissful transport. Reclining on a fragrant ottoman, he wandered on in a sweet reverie, dreaming such dreams as only ardent lovers dream, and vibrating with such intense, tender longings as only impassioned souls realize. The fond reverie had just reached its climax of ravishing sweetness, when his wandering eye caught sight of a shining trinket on the dressing-table. 'Ah!' he thought, 'this is some precious bit of jewellery I have never seen, perhaps some gift from a former

lover. Is it manly? yet I must see. Love is daring, and it can bear anything but suspicion;’ and thus muttering, Monsieur started to his feet, and soon had the small, peculiarly-shaped locket in his hand. Could it be that Rosa was false as beautiful? Suddenly Monsieur seemed turned into stone, and time, eternity, and his very manhood all collapsed into chaotic confusion. Overcome by some discovery or suspicion, he entirely lost his place in the scale of being and the cycle of ages. He neither knew past nor present, or if he was a man or some monster changed in appearance by some invisible power to suit its own caprice. Of a truth, some power had rapidly painted his face old and haggard, and his eyes and lips seemed stiffened by the last throes of departing life. By and by a ripple of emotion quivered round his proud mouth, and smiling agonizingly, like one bereft of reason, yet painfully conscious of their insanity, he turned the peculiar treasure over and over, and appeared fondling it like a bereaved parent caressing the remains of a departed child.

‘So you are here, dear, familiar friend; and after all my weary wandering I have found you at the time and in the place where I never wished you known, and where I have been basely false to all the love I vowed,’ he muttered in broken sentences. ‘Yet, what time and place do I mean? I am raving. I am the sport of mad fiends. Where am I? What is this? Ah! I now understand; I have been dreaming a long, sweet dream,—a dream like a romance,—and have just awoke to the consciousness of eternal night. I am just gradually coming round to the woful misery of conscious despair, and my long, sweet dream of rapturous luxury is fast receding, and I am feeling myself alone with a dead soul, festering and cancerous in its immortal centre.’

Monsieur seemed wishing to touch the spring, and gaze into the interior of the strange locket, but courage seemed to fail; and while he continued to gaze in vacant bewilderment, great sobs convulsed his heaving breast. Some strange memory seemed electrifying his entire soul, for he kissed the little treasure passionately, and then, as if ashamed, he threw it away as if its touch was instant death. One moment a cold, meaningless smile rippled his stony features with a sort of insane defiance; the next, a spasm of terrible sorrow made him fearful to look upon. Again the locket is snatched up, and his hand closed over it as if to press out its existence. It bears his murderous grasp unharmed, and now his finger is on the spring. Still he is unequal, for he pauses, and shades his eyes, as if to shut out the memory, and presses his hand on his burning forehead, to still or at least steady the bewildering excitement. Then he hears Rosa’s light footfall approaching, and quick as thought the magic locket is secreted in his vest pocket, and with a forced expression of cheerful concern he hastens to admit the fairy form who had given one gentle tap at his golden prison door.

‘Vance, dearest Vance, my heart is broken,’ she whispered in trembling accents, as she slipped inside and threw herself on her lover’s bosom, sobbing spasmodically. Her heart was too full for marking any change in the features or manner of the man she loved,

and thus unconsciously she knew not that her head rested on a bosom rent and torn like a tattered rag, or that his heart was faint and dying for one touch of kindred sympathy. 'Beloved Vance, too soon our bright day is turned into a dismal night of weeping. O God, life down here on earth is indeed a strange, bewildering tragedy! In a moment, our harp must be hung on the willow, and our head bent in woful lamentation. Only an hour ago, darling, we were swimming in the mystic joy of holy, indefinable pleasure, and found it hard to imagine sorrow and suffering possible. Now I am old and withered with grief, frosted and bitten until every sensitive cord in my being is writhing in torture, and coiled round in a fearful agony of mental pain. Vance, you are thinking me mad; but I dare not tell you, shame and horror seal my incoherent grief. In presence of my venerable aunt, swayed and blasted in her inner soul by a horrible, nameless grief, I was silent and awestruck, and with mock defiance strove to stem the rising torrent in my soul, and with an unnatural calmness bade her be comforted, and feel that after all it is far from us, and the doings of another. Now I want to cry, to shriek, or gibber out my overcharged anguish, like a poor lost child. This is too much, Vance darling; I cannot bear it. Oh, my heart! my heart is dry and cracking! O God, it cannot be! Avert the doom. Grant that the horrible suspicion may dissolve like a dream. Send the ascended Christ to catch the wandering sheep. Speed, Saviour, and snatch the brand on the very brink of self-destruction, and speak peace to the weary brain maddened with the inconsistencies of a time-serving life, and save him in mercy from such a fearful doom!'

Spent with sorrow, Rosa lay on the bosom of her lover; and although his arms were heavy and deathlike in their embrace, and his lips cold, and his kisses chilly like the touch of a corpse, she concluded it was all the result of his strong sympathy with her unexpected sorrow.

'Darling Rosa, how I pity you! It must be some real and fearful sorrow which thus afflicts you. May the good God over all help you to endure hardness like a true soldier,' Monsieur said, as he tenderly clasped her in his arms, and held her fiercely to his bosom, and earnestly longed death might come and there and then end both their sufferings, and open for them the mystic gates of never-ending blessedness. 'Do not think me indelicate or forward, but surely, darling, you can tell me everything? Have confidence in me, and tell all your sorrow and its cause. I can understand that some sudden and severe calamity has overtaken you, that some evil messenger has met the old lady with woful tidings. Be brave, Rosa, and drink the cup, however hard, with noble submission, and believe there is a time coming when we shall see above and behind all the bewildering confusion of mortal life—a time when God will wipe all tears away, and complete our life so that we will be satisfied.'

'Vance, dearest, I am indeed glad for these comforting words; already I feel stronger as I drink in the nectar of your tender sympathy,' Rosa replied, disengaging herself, and feeling she had given way more than she thought it possible for her to do. 'I am indeed indebted to you, for your words are to me like oil to troubled waters.

It is hard, yet I must try to bear up, and believe that behind every evil there is a good somewhere coiled up; that an infinite, good God can forgive the poor, desperate suicide, and justly consider the circumstances which combined to unhinge reason. Vance, dearest, I blush to confess it. When I try to speak, my tongue cleaves in burning torture to the roof of my mouth. Don't shrink from me, or shiver, when I tell you my poor uncle is missing, that suspicion points to but one horrid conclusion. Think of dear aunt listening to such reports on the street. To me it is hard; to her it is the death-knell of all her pride and ambition. The memory of Justice Anderson a mute, miserable page of pity and contempt! O Vance, it is hard! Pity and pray for my venerable aunt, for the wind has blown on all her cherished idols, on all her pride and ambition, and swept them away like stubble and chaff. Now, however, we must act. The bishop is with aunt, and I am for a moment free to attend to other business, and have come to tell you Henry has already been telegraphed for, and may be here in an hour. So, therefore, you must slip out at once and meet him and arrange. To-night we go to Scotland to aid in the sad search; but during our absence you will nurse and cheer aunt as you would your own mother, and so win her affection and consent to our union. Kindly bear with all her unbending defences of tradition, and devotion to the letter of Christianity; and oh! if she should die in my absence, hold her for me, gently, in your manly arms, caressingly smooth her beautiful silvery hair, and sing a low, sweet song of victory, as a prelude to the more rapturous song which will herald her approach to the great planet of glorified men and women which sweeps in the course of the immensities of God's works.'

Vance sobbed like a child, and the death-like pallor of his face was fearful to behold. 'Can I not go with you?' he feebly inquired. 'I cannot bear separation, and surely it is my duty to stand by you. However, if you command me to act for you here, the highest duty must be performed even if the flesh rebel. Noble Rosa! in the darkest hour and deepest sorrow you forget self, and only think and plan for others. The feeblest whisper of sympathy makes you shoulder the heaviest and most shameful cross, and cheerfully scale the steepest hill of difficulty. Across the very porch of hell, and over the sombre brow of the vilest devil, you would inscribe hope, and becalm the wailing horror of endless despair with the victory of infinite love.'

'It may be,' she said; 'but whatever my faith or power of enduring, I am feeling this keenly, and the clouds are so thick and the misery so chaotic, that I can scarcely find my way to a good, loving Father. I have a firm grasp and a comprehensive view of the divine government of God; but when the billows of real sorrow and misery roll over me, I cry out more because I suffer than that I cannot see the reason of such suffering. Therefore, while I can in a degree rise superior to all grief, and prove that in no one instance did God ever ordain, or even consider necessary, many or any of the sorrows and miseries which in turn bring suffering, it is a fearful reflection, nay, an overwhelming sorrow, to think the results of a false, inconsistent, selfish life are such as to overtax the faculties of reason, and make a fellow-creature, nay,

a near blood-relation, rush uncalled for into the more immediate presence of God, and while dripping with the cowardly hate of life, still find life beautiful and immortal, and only their darling lusts and passions the vile murderers which goaded them on, and covered them with shame and infamy. Deny it as we may, the suicide is a weak, selfish coward. Even the misery of insanity should be heroically endured, the noble mind feeling it is but a chained prisoner in a disorganized house. To long to be a clod, to get out of consciousness, to have done with uncongenial work and false friends, is sneaking cowardice, a mean advantage, a short cut to a long and sober repentance. Ah! I hear the muffled groans of aunt's breaking heart. One last embrace, dearest, and I must hasten to duty; and do not forget to meet Henry, and explain how matters stand.'

Monsieur held her to his bosom until her fainting heart cried for room to beat. His cold, frozen lips seemed sealed to hers; but Rosa never dreamt a double tragedy was being enacted,—that a twofold current of miserable sorrow was rolling in his inner soul, and that soon, very soon, it would reach her innocent heart, and murder its beautiful life with a fell blow. One more fond kiss, yet another embrace, and she is gone, and Monsieur is again alone.

'Rosa, darling, life of my life, joy of my soul,' Monsieur muttered as he buried his face in his hands, 'how nobly you endure, how clearly you comprehend, and how justly you judge! Would to heaven death had frozen us in that last embrace! But, alas! the miserable seem most tenacious of life. Death recedes in jeering mockery because it has nothing half so miserable to give in exchange. I feel that, of a truth, the suicide is a cowardly sneak, or I would make the venture, and haste me to have done with maddening grief. I have sinned, yet I am brave enough to try to atone, even if every minute of my remaining existence be liquid drops of consuming pain; and even if existence be continued a thousand years, I will accept the award of a just God, and wait for the time when His love has perfected me in all holiness. Rosa, I know your soul's life will crumple up, and its sunshine pass away, when you discover your idol, your king-man, your ideal hero is but a miserable deceiver, a cheat, a lie, a sneaking robber of your pure virgin love. It is for you I suffer, for you I am maddened with shame and remorse. Like a patient, slain lamb, you will bleed to death unseen, and uncomplainingly pray for the vile being on whose face you should set your foot and trample out his mean existence. Hatred and vengeance I could bear, scorn would make me strong; but your holy, forgiving love breaks me down, and I am withered and blasted in my inner man.'

Once the unhappy man crossed the room, moving in harmony with his passionate agony. Then he suddenly paused and drew the locket from his vest pocket, and as suddenly touched the spring. Not a ripple passed over his tearless, set features, not a sigh heaved in his bosom, but the flesh seemed consuming on his bones, and the skin of his face grew wrinkled, and his features pinched and drawn, and his fixed eyes receded into black-edged sockets. Yet it was the holy face of a sweet young girl, not much out of childhood, which smiled back

at his abject misery,—a sweet child looking in tender love on its parent.

‘Ah! so it is you, pure, gentle, angel-child, with your dimpled smile of happy innocence,’ Monsieur muttered in husky tones. ‘Dear, lovely Daisy, thy childhood found its life and early surroundings beneath the flooding tears of a forsaken, broken heart, and you drew your supply of life from the ebbing blood of a murdered soul sacrificed on the hellish Moloch of caste pride and empty position. Alas! with all our boasted enlightenment in social customs, we are but semi-barbarians, crawling sycophants to customs and fashions which crush out our true manhood. Daisy, tender pledge of a hapless love, can you in any way soften this consuming grief? Can my devotion to you in any way bridge over the infinite abyss rolling between me and God’s favour? I feel as if thy innocence would be a sweet-smelling savour, and that what you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. Daisy, loved child, I am a doomed man standing on the fatal drop. Could you now see me, you would understand why my tears fell so fast as I stroked your golden hair. Great God! I feel everlastingly condemned. Already my sentence has gone forth. Down the long ages I hear the thundering voice of Jesus saying, “It were better for you a millstone were hung around your neck, and you drowned in the depths of the sea, than that you offend one of these innocent ones, or cause them to sin.” Yes, celestial voice! my sentence is just, and I must know all; I must touch this other spring:

‘Oh! haunting shadows on the wall,
 Figures moving on the glass,
 Ghosts which make the conscience quail,
 Mocking spectres, will you pass?
 Avaunt! for I am torn with pain,
 Answering back the dying slain.’

While he spoke or soliloquized the second spring had been touched, and with a look of musing wonderment he stood gazing on the beautiful face of a lovely woman in the full flush of womanhood. No new expression of pain, however, passed over his worn, woful face, but he appeared like one awaking out of a long trance, and at a loss to realize whereabouts he had found himself. ‘Agatha, Agatha!’ he said in tones so sad and changed, that his voice sounded like the wail of a feeble old man agonizing over the bloody corpse of a murdered son, ‘I am weak and helpless as a wailing infant. Agatha! something tells me you are a happy saint, for ever done with time, and that I need not prolong my search; and if thou art happy, surely you can forgive me! View my anguish, and if aught of revenge linger in your immortal spirit, witness this horrible misery, and be satisfied. Haste to God, and say it is enough, and let His favour speak peace to my desolate soul. Surely you are satisfied; for I am blasted like a lightning-struck tree, my soul is dry and consumed, and all its life and hope for ever cut off. Agatha, dearest idol I have ever worshipped, I know you will pity and forgive; but even mercy is harder to endure than judgment. Ah! I must have been loving thee in another; yet what misery have I wrought! In weak selfishness I have slain another soul, drained its life, and given

it ashes in return. In giving man woman, God gave him an angel, but he too often is to her Satan in the form of a smooth-skinned serpent. We hang murderers of physical life; but subtle soul murderers, Satanic destroyers of souls, of God's life, pass unharmed, and too often undespised. The killer of the body may be an angel in disguise, with God and heaven following in his bloody track; but the soul murderer, the vile seducer of confiding love, is the devil incarnate, spreading broadcast the misery and woe of hell. Holy Father! if I dare utter Thy name, dare lift my guilty soul toward Thee, in mercy for human error and sin, accept this intense, sincere agony and repentance, and guide me to lost Agatha. It appears as if my forsaken angel had at once proven my falsehood and fidelity, in coming to me in the face and form of darling Rosa. It must be, for in the sober hours of sad reflection I have ever considered them twin spirits, and at this moment I lose all identity, and am beside myself with shame, grief, despair, and bewildering mystery. A thousand forms of agonizing misery and suspense are rending my individuality of conscious life, and yet I seem growing more immortal and tenacious of power under every crushing weight of agony. Wonderful mystery of life! whence thy origin, and what thy destiny and purpose? Dear heaven! am I awake or a wandering somnambulist? a man or a fiend, playing saint and devil in turns? O cursed hour wherein I bartered my manhood, sold my dignity of soul, for a miserable soap-bubble, and bent in sneaking homage to a lie, an insincere sham! Woe is me! but I repent in dust and ashes, and hate every thought and feeling save the pure love and noble sacrifice of these lovely women. Agatha, I must find you, must see you, if only for one short hour, and bask my soul in the redeeming warmth of your forgiving mercy. Ah! I am losing time; I must ring for Rosa, and at once tell her all, and throw myself on her divine mercy. Better far to face the whole at once, to be for ever done with falsehood and disguise, and if possible, to press all this infinite torture into one hour of bloody agony, shame, and remorse. Would I could die! Author of life! snap the silver cord, and take away the mystic pulse, for I am weary of pride and passion, fame and position; and love, the joy of life, is dead. In mercy absorb the mystic pulse, and let me crumble into dusty unconscious elements, and become one with the immensity and mystery of matter.'

Monsieur's hand was on the bell, and he seemed preparing himself for some fearful ordeal, when suddenly a new idea darted through his mind, and to all appearance a more shameful and desperate sorrow surged his entire being. His eyes glared with horrified pity, and gasping for breath, he smote on his breast and wrung his hands as if he would press out the horrid thought at his finger ends.

'Can it be?' he inquired in hurried, spasmodic accents. 'This, if true, will for ever brand me a double murderer. Ah! it must be; and henceforth, amid all the gay and beautiful in God's creation, I must wander a branded outcast, realizing nothing save disgust and loathing remorse. Now I dare not meet the pure look of righteous Rosa, but must sneak away like a crawling worm. Agatha! if thou hast thus suffered, no punishment is too hard or too immortal for my

sin. In trampling on thy love I murdered your soul, and in turn, it is only just that mine be a sacrifice, slain by shame and remorse. A slain, murdered soul! ah! 'tis misery, blank and woful. Proud, unprincipled mother, look now on the splendid ruin of your pride and prejudice! What the pride of birth and position to a soul cancerous through and through with shame and remorse? Happy son, blessed daughter, whose parents are to you wisdom and understanding, and who set before you the law of the Most High!

Now Monsieur was calm, and some firm resolve pulsed his entire being with stolid action. The Vance who had so lately talked of love to Rosa, and so ardently kissed her lovely lips and brow, was dead and buried in a deep, dark tomb, and an old, seared, haggard man, with blank misery engraven on every feature, was hurriedly arriving at some definite mode of action. The mysterious locket seemed inseparably connected with all his new-found sorrow, and he hastily put the attached blue ribbon round his neck, and secreted the locket inside his under-shirt. Then he stole to his own bedroom like a panther watching for prey. Hastily he scribbled a few lines and addressed them to Henry Hamilton; and simply taking his money and jewellery, he watched an opportunity to leave the house unseen. To escape was an easy matter, as all the household were absorbed in the one sad theme, the suspicious disappearance and supposed horrid fate of Justice Anderson. Passing the drawing-room, Monsieur heard the mournful groans of Mrs. Aslawn's breaking heart, and the pathetic tenderness of Rosa's noble sympathy; and a great, stifled moan escaped from between his set teeth, and the laboured throes of his swollen heart made him gasp for breath, and reel and stagger, and as he descended the carved winding stair, he clung to the railing to support his bending limbs. For a moment he paused, and his soul hungered for one last look of her lovely face, thirsted for one kiss; but the horrid memory mantled his pallid cheeks with a burning blush of shame, and like a drowning man making one desperate effort to gain the shore, he leaped down the stair, and ran out by the back entrance. Fortune seemed favouring his escape. Just as he reached the wall door, an empty cab was almost on him on its way to the town. Only a few words passed, but the handsome fee pleased the driver, and hurriedly closing the hansom door, he mounted and drove off at a furious rate, and Monsieur sank on his knees, and burying his face in the worn cushions of the seat, sobbed out his overcharged grief.





CHAPTER XLI.

A PEEP AT A CLUB-ROOM.

IN an elegantly furnished room in one of the most fashionable clubs in the west of London, three gentlemen, still young, were chatting over some light wines, and evidently waiting dinner. The eldest of the three we at once recognise as Sir C. Richland, and on his right was our friend Martin Dawson, and the voluptuous personage on his left appeared to be an exiled prince of royal blood. From the conversation it was evident that Dawson was not a member of the said club, but had been invited thither for some purpose by his aristocratic companions; and when dinner was announced he rose to depart, saying other engagements called for his attention. The foreign personage, however, got hold of the retreating man of letters, and refusing to listen to any excuses, insisted on Dawson humouring him by remaining to dine. His other engagements had evidently been of such a nature as to be put aside without seriously annoying any one, or in the least interfering with the nobility of his character, for he was prevailed on to remain. Like most men and women of letters, Dawson was exceedingly fond of mixing with all sorts and conditions of men, and drew all the scenes of his various works from true experiences of real life. The exiled prince was specially charmed with his conversation, his racy humour, sharp wit, and rare wisdom; and Dawson evidently found in him an interesting personage, for he questioned him well on his hopes, his political ideas, the state of his country, his favourite statesmen, and the various forms of civilization and barbarism he had seen in his wanderings.

‘Hurrah! most noble prince. I see you have power and can prevail,’ Richland exclaimed. ‘Believe me, not one in a thousand can manage to lead that lion of literature, that chaste celibate and solitary ascetic. It is, indeed, a victory to prevail on the gods of poesy to eat and drink with sensual swine; may we profit by the condescension, and catch the mystic inspiration of those who live on the spiritual manna! Each day I am realizing more and more that we live in strange times, in Utopian times, when true miracles are the rule, and bigoted tradition a subject of withering criticism.’

‘I trust the dinner is as well seasoned and savoury with the perfection of gastronomy as your remarks are with the spice of sarcasm,’ the prince said, filling the glasses, and giving a hearty example in empty-

ing. 'That is rare old brandy, and I must admit the spread is in every respect *recherché*. *Messieurs*, set to, for I am famishing with hunger, and my grace is, "May we always have as rare a spread and as good an appetite." I confess I really like an English dinner, and the very luxury of eating such tempting morsels is sufficient to make any ordinary man cling to life with tenacious eagerness. I wonder the poor can care for life. It must be horrible, feeding on oatmeal and sour milk, and barley broth made of fat! However, I am not all swallowed up in gormandism, and wish all success, *mon cher* Dawson, to your new work. I can admire art and science; and when I read such works as yours, I feel the purifying influence of true inspiration. Deny it as we may, I really think the great Author of life lives and moves in a very special manner in some men and women; and if our times are too advanced for believing in divine inspiration, I feel, like the Romans, that our great leaders are full of some might and power, if not supernatural, at least super-mortal. I will, therefore, be honest, and admit that an independent writer is, indeed, the marrow, blood, and backbone of a country. How these princes and princesses among men ascend the hill Difficulty, and pioneer the soul's slumbering aspirations! I confess, however, that you cut the royal quick when you thunder at aristocratic barbarism, monarchical pauperism, imperial robbery, and the Satanic cruelty of war. Nevertheless, my sober humanity tells me you are on the side of righteousness; and even if it be romantic and impracticable, I admire your high-toned Liberalism, that seeks to make every individual realize heaven on earth.'

'For goodness' sake, don't preface your common-sense grace with a serio-comic address,' Richland put in, helping Dawson and himself to a savoury dish of fish. 'Like all exiles in hopes of a kingdom, the prince is given to indulge in fantastic reveries, and to hold with the popular opinion, be it grave or gay, wise or daring, in speculative adventure. Set to eating at once, Dawson, for I can tell you I intend making a clearance of most I see. These three days' court excitement has completely emptied me; and I am in rare condition for a glorious feed. Don't look shocked, for I tell you honestly, I do not know how you studious fellows get on, only eating sufficient to keep body and soul together.'

'I suppose all manner of absurd nonsense is said about men and women of letters,' Dawson remarked. 'Of course, I am only one of that peculiar class, but I can tell you I eat and drink, sleep and wake, much after the general fashion of ordinary mortals. It ever appears to me that the real difference in men and women is not so much in physical modes of living and acting, as in the inner thought, and the modes of expression of thought and feeling. For instance, the pure and impure man, the rustic and refined gentleman, eat and drink much after the same manner, unless in the mere handling of the spoon or knife and fork, and have each the same feelings of pleasure in having the wants of the body gratified. Nevertheless, the pure man is infinitely removed from the impure, and lives in a mental and spiritual region of which the other is entirely ignorant. So, likewise, a great gulf rolls between the rude and refined. The rude man sleeps or wallows in

indifferent inaction the moment the physical cravings of hunger are satisfied, whereas the refined man revels in all the beauties of artistic refinement, and the mind and soul grow, and enjoy the glorious luxury of immortal life. It is therefore in the inner life and sympathy that what we call great men and women differ from the common plodder; and the longer I live, I am the more deeply impressed with the sad fact that, to a great extent, all really great and good men and women are solitary, and far removed from the general throng.'

'Your oneness with us in the common concerns of eating and drinking more and more reveals your noble character in all its intact greatness,' the prince remarked. 'I confess, I like to see a man manly all through, and have a sort of supreme contempt for those yellow-faced fellows who claim to be poets and artists, and who pinch their flesh with unnatural abstinence, and yet stare at a cook-shop with great, hungry eyes, and who lie on bare boards, and wear monkish or mendicant dress. The Holy Word says the body is the temple of the soul; therefore my idea is, that a beautiful, robust body bespeaks a sound, even-balanced mind, and it strengthens my idea when I find a true man and great public teacher can so heartily and naturally associate with publicans and sinners.'

'In the main I agree with your remarks,' Dawson said; 'nevertheless, I trust your serene highness understands that associating with men of immoral character does not mean sympathy with their actions, ideas, or manner of behaving. Think of it as you may, your notoriety, and that of your companion, Sir Charles, in this divorce case, is not to your credit. The revelations of such cases are black spots on the pages of the nineteenth century. It makes my whole soul boil with indignation and shame, to think large numbers of men among all classes, and especially among the upper and better educated, find their supreme pleasure in the fiendish seduction of women. Talk of education and enlightenment, but I can tell you criticism and polished refinement may be as cold and more barren of pure morality and spirituality than all orthodox superstition and bigotry. Modern society is splendid at condoning male sensualism, nevertheless the loathsome bloodguiltiness remains the same; and to kill the life and love of the soul, and leave a helpless woman or young girl with the brand of shame set upon her, as she shrinks away to ebb out her suffering and wrong unseen and unpitied, is worse than outright murder. It is a foul libel on man as a reasonable, responsible creature, to say our national disgrace of prostitution is essential. The man who cannot rule his own body is the slave of a mean, beastly monster, and should for all offences against the laws of morality receive condign punishment.'

'For goodness' sake, draw it a little more mild, Dawson,' Richland struck in. 'I grant you, there is no use denying we have been popular the wrong way for a few days, and with all my thick-skinnedness, I have had to drink rather heavily to keep up cheek to face it out. From the very bottom of my heart, I wish I had never known Lady Moray. If it had not been for the shameful dishonesty of her maid in stealing some letters I foolishly wrote her, my name would never have come up in the matter. The same, too, with my friend the prince. It was all a

lark, and Lady Moray is not half so bad as hundreds who are more cunning and conforming. However, the fact that she is off with Geddes settles the whole affair. Of course Moray wishes to get up a sort of sympathy-sensation in his own behalf by painting her as black as possible. After this I will have no faith in servants; I think they are the most selfish, dishonest pack under the sun. At any moment they would sell their master or mistress to shame or death for money. Only think of feeding and paying a mean spy, who, when trusted with confidence, plays the fiendish betrayer under the guise of a soft-smiling friend. Another thing, those blasted newspaper reporters don't abide by truth, and would canvass earth and hell, and poke their nose into the most sacred sanctum, for a sensational or paying article. Anything that pays in this untoward generation is the right thing in the right place. Even the pulpit has been howling over us fashionable sinners, and having a special collection, all because we have the honesty to live our creed. However, I do not wish to justify myself, and often think virtue as well as honesty the best policy. The thing which annoys me is, why should pulpit and press rave so much about a few spotted sinners, and yet look over the sin in its general power and virulency, as it sneaks under the guise of religion and the protection of church membership? You, who are a metaphysician and moralist, may be able to tell us how it is possible for sin to exist outside a sinner, and by what process of reasoning a preacher of righteousness can condemn one or two sinners, and yet wink at the same sin as it exists as a national disgrace.'

'It appears to me your question is vague and rather illogical,' Dawson replied; 'not, however, in the idea as I apprehend it, but in the form of the dress, and especially when you put it side by side with absurd and narrow theological conceptions of good and evil. In the far past, *i.e.* in the early infancy and innocence of mankind, I believe there was neither sin nor a sinner. We call evil sin because it is contrary to the healthy laws of our physical and mental wellbeing. If the unviolated laws of our being be healthy, it naturally follows that we possess innate righteousness or soundness. And being free to conceive and create, it in no way takes from the absolute goodness of the infinite the fact that the finite can conceive and bring forth evil. Thus you will see it is possible for men to create evil, and I can see your evil existing in yourself, without in the least sharing in the evil. Again, I can see the said evil which you have begun existing outside the sinner. For example, the innocent child inherits a diseased body from its drunken, sensual parent, and in such cases you find the sin existing outside the sinner. In infirmaries, ragged schools, and the disease-engendering vapours which for ever float in the overcrowded districts of all large cities, we find in one and all of these sad evidences of evil existing outside the actual evil-doer. However, this suffering, which is ever inseparable from evil, ever following as its everlasting punishment, is at the same time also an earnest of the original purity of the human conscience. Therefore, I believe, as mind more and more escapes into the sunlight of spiritual knowledge, mankind generally will overcome evil, or at least reduce it to a mere minimum. If you feel

offended at being so universally spotted in this case, you must remember it is only when general sins practised cunningly come to the front in particular cases, that moralists and religionists can howl, as you characterize the just indignation of the pulpit and press. Another thing, you must not forget that although we are called a Christian nation, our civil legislation is all founded on the principles and doctrine of Judaism. We may preach Christ on Sabbath, but during six days it is Moses who judges the people. From the police court up to the imperial House of Lords, we exact an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and a life for a life. To forgive, however, is the most severe of all punishment, as well as the most redemptive. In most cases, the goodness and mercy which forgives shames the most hardened sinner, and worketh true repentance. However, only the good and pure can forgive. At present I forbear going any deeper into the metaphysical subtleties of evil. Enough for each and all of us should be the fact that the destructiveness of evil is seen and realized over the length and breadth of the whole earth; and such being the case, the main business of each and all should be to live and labour for its complete expulsion. I will not say you are too severe in condemning society in its intense craving for the morbid and sensational. We, however, generally judge society and individuals from our own moral standpoint. An impure man cannot believe in virtue, save as a mask to veil lust; and a miser cannot be affected save through his money interests, and believes mammon is the god before whom all prostrate their entire being. To judge righteously either a nation or an individual, we must be one with both at all points. We must know all the temptations, all the inherent virtue, all the struggles to overcome, and all the sorrow at the falls, before we can judge an individual; and in regard to a nation or society, not by a few outstanding vices or virtues, but by the general achievements, by the heart of honesty, and the tone of the education, and the general effort put forth by the prophets, teachers, and philanthropists and legislators, can we judge a nation. I grant you, there is plenty and to spare of hypocrisy, sensualism, selfishness, and insincerity; nevertheless, that is not all, nor yet half. It would be a poor day for any country if such as you were all that remained to represent the nobility of mankind. At no time in the world's history was there ever such a mighty host of inspired men and women, living noble, Christ-like lives, and working day and night to raise the whole human family up to communion with God as its father and redeemer, and to bring in the great brotherhood of universal concord.'

'I might have known you would silence me with a flow of rhetoric,' Richland replied. 'If you have not exactly defined sin and its relationship to the sinner, you have endeavoured to prove it a purely human invention, and have so hemmed me in that I admit, from your standpoint, the justness of your conclusions. I am not exactly a blasphemous scorner, and although a practical atheist, I can respect the good which holds its own free of all cant and narrow bigotry.'

'You likewise hold your own at brandy-drinking,' Dawson said; 'and

if you go on draining and filling your glass, we have seen an end to all sober conversation.'

'That is one for you, old boy,' Richland replied. 'However, the Holy Book says it is good for a man to eat and drink, and heartily enjoy his portion under the sun. I am simply like my master, and Solomon's creed is mine; and I need not tell you that a man in our times without a creed is a more dangerous person than "Old Nicky Ben"—"the deil"; and that a man with a logical, orthodox creed in his head, and a Bible in a church pew, can live and wax rich in all commercial robbery; and so long as he can pay well to gloss over his want of consistency, he can keep as many wives as he pleases. Most, you see, believe in Solomon, and if he be set, as I doubt not, for an example, I have not yet reached his degree of excess. Calvin or St. Paul will be more to your way of thinking, I presume?'

'I do not believe much in pattern saints or sinners, and do not feel justified in too severely condemning any man,' Dawson remarked. 'However, like all bad men, you copy Solomon's sensualism without adding to it his grace of repentance and strong vindication of goodness. Solomon fell, and hated the evil and his own weakness in being led into temptation; but you wallow in the mire, and roll evil like a sweet morsel under your tongue. In short, the evils and errors of a wise man make us sad and reflective, and the deep pathos of such a one's weird, wailing repentance is to us correction and saving reproof; but the sensualism and sin of an ignorant, boastful fool is rottenness to the marrow of our life. I am not passionately attached to either St. Paul or Calvin. Both were great, good men, according to the light within them, and in their day did much good; and it is not their fault if vast numbers of men and women have crystallized their opinions into huge systems of absurd doctrine. It was never St. Paul's intention to create a score of different sects, all warring over his particular meaning of this and that saying, which had special reference to the maxims, morals, and manners of the times in which he lived. Again and again he exhorts all to love, purity, and charity, and plainly says that the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life and liberty. In regard to the leading Calvinistic belief, I confess I have no sympathy whatever with election salvation. The revelation of God in the conscience tells me hell will for ever burn wherever sin reigns; and that as soon as evil hath lost its power, heaven, joy, and peace begin. Hell and evil are both human creations, for God only delighteth in love, beauty, mercy, and goodness.'

'Dawson, my good fellow, you are far too enlightened and comprehensive for me,' Richland replied. 'I confess that is the shortest and best sermon I ever listened to. When a man or woman speaks in that downright, earnest manner, something within me prostrates itself, and I feel better. Religion, however, as professed on Sunday, and set before me in our national prayer-book, I do not feel as a holy influence. Do as I may, I cannot realize our Sunday Christianity as the inspiration of God, or the general feeling the state of mind acceptable to Him. I have often puzzled my brain wondering if religion is a natural growth, or an imparted or imputed grace. In a word, what is religion? I hear

people speak of religious men and women, but I must confess I don't know what they mean.'

'I suppose you mean that you wonder if Christ, Moses, Buddha, and all ancient and modern religious reformers and teachers came to bring some divine principle from heaven, or to awaken and stimulate natural powers, covered over with worldliness, superstition, and indifference?' Dawson inquired.

'Exactly,' Richland replied. 'That is just what I mean, only I do not know so well as you all about the various religious teachers; and I also often wonder if the various forms of worship be religion, or only the tubes or channels through which we give it expression.'

'I do not suppose any reasonable person will for a moment seek to deny the fact that during all ages and in all countries the most barbarous of mankind have given some rude expressions of veneration for something above them,' Dawson said. 'Therefore, adding historic evidence to my own strong innate convictions, I affirm that by nature mankind are religious. I do not, however, deny the possibility of selfishness completely destroying this divine faculty or power. Just as in uncivilized nations ignorance and superstition have made the human mind bow before stones and other dumb idols, or fearful monsters of the sea or forest, so in more enlightened lands men and women make gods of money, of fashion, or some besetting sin. Nay, I believe some may be born destitute of spiritual perceptions, just as some have no ear for music or no inventive genius; and those worshipping an ideal humanity, and working for such, need not be defamed if they cannot realize a personal God. Religion, it appears to me, is veneration for all that we can understand of goodness; and to be religious is to endeavour to act in harmony with our ideal of goodness and righteousness as existing above us. To define religion, however, in all its infinitude of glory, love, reverence, and obedience is impossible, because its deepest aspirations and duties apply to feeling and conscience in its saintly excellences; and language, nay, even action and the yearning of inexpressible desire, cannot define feeling or measure its powers and possibilities. Buddha, Moses, and Christ brought nothing from heaven, save their own new, beautiful lives. Religion, certainly, as lived by these was a new revelation from God to awaken the slumbering, and draw the wandering back to the pure springs of life; and woe, woe to the nation or the age which has no prophets and teachers! Prayer and praise, and Sunday confessions of belief in God, are expressions of religious life, but upright living and active deeds of sympathy and charity are diviner expressions.'

'Stop, stop, Dawson; you are far beyond my depth and experience,' Richland said. 'I like your definition of religion, but I fear my religious faculty is so coated over that it has expired long ago. My god has been self-exaltation, self-pleasing, self first and last in every idea and scheme. Water cannot rise above its own level, and seeing I have done nothing but commune with self, and seek after selfish gratification, I wonder I am not worse. However, I feel every day I live that self is but an empty, cancerous void, and in order to drown discontent, and put a little artificial steam on, I find a solace in strong drink. The truth is, human life all over is a muddled mystery, and I am

generally so miserable that I don't care how soon I was done with the whole concern. It looks beautiful and heroic to talk religion, but once evil has a stronghold in a man, one may as well think of walking to the moon on foot as to keep right on acting the saint. Another thing, I don't believe in a future state. When we are dead, we're done. Of what consequence can we be to the great Author of life? He can far easier create other beings than redeem such a miserable wreck as your humble servant. Come, prince, you are looking rather serious. What are you thinking of our discussion?'

'In the first place, as I always do, thinking you a complete, blustering fool,' the exiled prince remarked. 'In the second, I feel Dawson is right; and in this Moray divorce case we certainly are in a miserable position. With all my stupidity, I have always been a firm believer in the existence of a good, personal God, not far from any one of us, and have no sympathy whatever with the trashy atheistic philosophy now so flaunted as a sort of superior intelligence. Whatever the end, better believe in a good God, even if human life be surrounded with mystery and misery, than bow down to finite conceits and wild theories of what we can never comprehend. Even if we push nature back millions and millions of cycles before historic man, and even before traces of organized life, the mystery will be no nearer *dénouement*. My work, however, is not to defend or teach theology, but, if possible, to regain my throne. At present I am simply an exile living on dreams; and while I do not agree to give a kingdom to a fool, even if he be a hereditary prince, I think that if that hereditary prince be for the people, and willing to be on the side of progress, justice, and righteousness, no democratic fanaticism should be allowed to rob him of his right. I may yet be restored to my people, and I think men such as myself should have a special political training. I think the greatest evil that can befall a man is to be called a prince, and pensioned off to do nothing but spend a princely income trying to kill time. Work, actual, independent work, is the way to make a man. I think the day God chased Adam from loitering in paradise, and sent him to work in rough fields, was the beginning of the gospel of man's redemption. The ruin of men such as Richland there, and myself, is too much money and nothing to do. It may sound rather strange to a toiling, horny-handed labourer, with too much work and too little reward, yet I honestly confess there have been times when I have cursed my position, and despised its menial dependence on public bounty. Often I have longed to be free of all monarchical connection and oppression, and in a position to enter into the sympathies and aspirations of the people, and thus, by the sweat of my brain and the humanity of my policy, raise myself to the position of a true prince and deliverer. It is poor honour that of hereditary right, if you feel the selfishness and the bigotry, the vain pomposity and oppression, of a descent of bloody cruelty, sensualism, gluttony, and mental imbecility pulsating in your blood. What is my position compared to that of your "people's William"? Such, and only such, are the kings of men, swayed by a mighty inspiration of justice and enthusiasm for right. Dawson, I only repeat I am an unhappy, miserable man, and have in

the past taken a fearful revenge on myself by drifting with the current. It is easy going with the tide. Now, however, I am to catch the oars and pull hard before I get into the whirling eddies of the rapids. I can yet return, and, God helping me, I will.'

'You speak like a man, prince,' Dawson remarked; 'and I deeply sympathize with your position. Those who wait on dead men's shoes in our democratic times are resting on a very insecure plank. It is simply bare justice that a nation have a right to choose its own representative head, and this way of choosing by majorities is the most consistent way of advancing order and consistent progress. We have only to look all over the civilized world, and carefully read the signs of the times, to feel convinced great political changes are slowly but surely being wrought. Higher ideas of justice, and more enlightenment on all subjects, are clearly foretelling that only the forms of government which represent to a degree the best, greatest, and grandest in humanity can endure. I do not see why a hereditary prince should not be a really noble man, full of mercy, purity, and all intelligence. It is a worn-out saying, oft repeated, there is no royal road to learning. On the contrary, the road is royal all through, shining with jewels of heavenly beauty. Of course, it is not by desiring to be learned that one can attain excellence; but the work is as delightful as the end is glorious. If there be a man above all others who requires to be learned in all history, in all science and art, and especially in the wants of the people, it is he who fancies he may one day be the head of a nation. Our "people's William" is, indeed, a man with a soul as morally pure as his intellect is clear and comprehensive; and both Liberals and Tories in our country put too many untried men into Parliament. The man who intends becoming a member of Parliament should lecture for a year or two, or write political essays, and let it be seen if he is really a man capable of doing more than merely voting with a winning majority. One thing is certain, if princes and kings will not educate and advance the people in these latter times, the people will educate them, or give them a free discharge the moment they are real obstructions in the way of liberty and retrenchment.'

'Your words of wisdom sink deep into my wearied soul,' the exiled prince replied. 'Should I be so fortunate as be restored to my people, I shall remember you with feelings of grateful veneration. It would appear a really liberal, great, good king is a miracle at any time, and in our age would be a rare phenomenon. However, from a mere child I have had faint longings to be something more than a mere expensive state appendage; but it is hard running right in the face of all tradition, and family proclivities, and home influence. Whatever the consequence, I am now determined to be something more than a traditional mummy or puppet king. If you help me with advice, Dawson, I shall go in for the right thing. If you only make my laws and write my speeches, I will carry them through. In the beginning, I will have done with shot and shell. If we be less in number than your great united nation, I shall teach my people to stand with their arms crossed, calm and strong in the right. In all countries the masses of the people are ignorant

of their inherent power as a corporate body; and if there was more enlightenment, and real unity in regard to general principles, it would be, as you say, impossible for any form of oppressive, expensive government to exist. Under all circumstances, war is an insane blunder. View it as we may, it is simply murder and robbery legalized; and when a nation impiously goes to war with Christian on its flag, it is a sight which might well make devils hide with blushing shame. It appears to me the deepest degradation a civilized nation can sink into is to proclaim war with a savage chief over a tribe of semi-barbarians, marshalling its fine troops, and pouring out its life and money hunting down weak, uneducated swarms of human beings, and when victorious, burning their wives and children. Therefore, if I am ever restored to my people, I will distinguish myself by inaugurating an everlasting peace policy. I may not be able to influence other civilized nations to do likewise. Nevertheless, small although we be, our firm resolve to live justly and die meekly, with our hands over our bosom, for peace and righteousness, may not be lost. Christ, as one man standing alone for conscience and God, has wrought a vast work for humanity—in fact, has done more than all ancient and modern wars, cutting through files of poor, trembling men driven to death by the mad yell of fanaticism. We hear a great deal of religious fanaticism, but I think in all ages political fanaticism is far more general and dangerous.'

'With all my heart I congratulate you, prince, on your common sense and noble intention,' Dawson replied. 'Although I am an Englishman to the backbone, I will heartily espouse your cause, and become your first minister or helping consort. Now that you have put your hand to the plough, I trust you don't look back to the flesh-pots of Egypt. Now, if ever, is the time for heirs to fine estates and kingdoms distinguishing themselves with the poetry of true romance and the heroism of noble character. As you say, expensive state appendages, hereditary robbers, and imbecile puppets are alike out of date and demand. The man who can wantonly hunt a poor, panting deer to death, could shoot a fellow-creature like a crow were it not that righteous law would call him to account. Think of it as we may, I believe, in the sight of God, wanton cruelty to the lower animals is a greater as well as more cowardly sin than cruelty to a creature endowed with equal mental powers. However, some day, if God spare me, I intend writing a book in support of the rights of the lower animals.'

'Goodness! where are we drifting? You two are driving fast and furious, and no mistake,' Sir Charles remarked. 'Well, with all my sins, I have never been a hunting barbarian, and often think the four-footed tribe and winged fowl have a poor time of it. And seeing we so enjoy eating their flesh, we might, if possible, kill them in the most humane manner. You may not believe it, but I have actually wept over a half-shot hare with its great eyes pleading with mute entreaty, and its limbs all quivering with mortal pain. Entitle your book, *A Voice from the Animal World*, and I believe you will do more to humanize and spiritualize society than a thousand volumes of theological doctrine. Think on a chapter headed, 'A Deer's Address to the Imperial House of Parliament,' and so on, every class of animals

made to agitate for law and justice. I expect the moment women are empowered to vote, the lower animals will hold a conference, forming a committee for the emancipation of all four-footed animals. Well, well, we do live in fast, funny times. Now-a-days one never knows what an hour will bring forth. Only a few months ago fashionable Lady Moray was canting at the Derby like a paid Bible-woman; now she is divorced, and about to be married to the gallant captain. By the way, I hear a report that Moray is on for marrying that literary phenomenon, Mrs. Sidney; and to-night my jolly, exiled prince is selling his birthright of imperial bluster and crown prestige for the glory and excitement of a republican presidency. So be it; *all's well that ends well*, and may I be there to see! However, if the conversation I have been listening to be nothing more than the chime of rippling music, it is such a sweet sound to the wild man, such a purifying sound to the unclean man, such a healing sound to the diseased man, such a soothing one to the weary, anxious sufferer, and such a welcome sound to the enslaved, and a refreshing sound to the weird, plodding atheist, and such a joyful sound to the oppressed and heavily taxed, that I believe each and all will catch up the pathetic strains, and feel that the music of love, of charity, and peace on earth and goodwill from heaven, alone can satisfy the infinite hunger in the human soul, and make it realize at least a corporate paradise and a corporate immortality. Now I am in such a mood for romance and poetry, you might tell us a story, Dawson. Seeing you are the nephew of the late Mr. Sidney, I am sure you can tell us if it be true that the gifted authoress is Moray's first love?

'Ah! yes, a story, Dawson, please,' the exiled prince repeated; 'I, too, like a story. All human life is a story, and if our novel writers only knew how to write the romance of real life, and let unnatural imaginings go to the wind, it would be a boon to the reading world. It is delightful reading some of your beautiful stories, as they make the ghosts of our hidden sins stand out. And it must be something grand beyond expression to hear you relate one in measured, modulated accents. What a dull, prosy world it would be without story-tellers! A novel-writer has a charm and power few can resist. What we want now is more politics, more religion, and more science and art in novels, and less mere pandering to sexual passions.'

'You are in for a story, Dawson,' Sir Charles reiterated. 'Like his serene highness, I too revel in a good story, and never weary of old haunted castles, and *Æsop's Fables* never grow old. Come, Dawson, I can see the muse descending, dancing, like the witches round Tam o' Shanter's mare Meg; I see around you the inspiring fairies fluttering like wood-nymphs, emptying their golden vessels of incense on your head. Do let us have a fragment of the early life of your wonderful aunt-in-law.'

'There is some truth as well as a great amount of overdrawn falsehood in the present eight-day gossip,' Dawson replied; and the thoughts of the great poet and novelist seemed far away, as if the eye of the soul was gazing into an infinitude of life hidden from all but himself. 'I know many years ago Moray met Mrs. Sidney, then Senga Richmond, living in humble obscurity; the said gent met her at a time when

she was ignorant of the great gifts slumbering in her unawakened soul, and when no earthly passion of love or ambition had created an immortal hunger in her sympathetic heart. Now, however, as you know, that mountain lily is one of the most wonderful women of our time, and I need not tell you how she can play on the subtle instrument, the human heart, in its deepest and most pathetic tones, with the skill of a true metaphysician; and while delicately touching the mystic chords of sacred feeling, we are transported from a scene of deep tragic sorrow into the elysium of Platonic love, and prostrated before the inner soul of beauty, sublimated with the divine glory of sacrifice. Then we weep and laugh in turn over childhood joys and sorrows, and feel all our hearts aglow, and our pulses beating a thousand degrees in a minute, as happy lovers' lips meet in a confluence of happy endearment. A truce, however, to vain generalizing; why need I attempt summing up one who is still every day hammering out new thought, and weaving out of her brain, like the silkworm from its bowels, thought and feeling which sways the universal heart of humanity with its pathos and sympathetic passion? Yet there was a time when that sublime soul could say:

'Like a pearl in ocean shell I lay,
Hid in mountain solitude far away.'





CHAPTER XLII.

A STORY WITHIN A STORY.

FLOWING port and fruit had taken the place of more substantial viands, and leaning back in his chair, and spreading out his long, well-shaped limbs, thrusting his hands far down in his trouser pockets, and letting his noble head fall forward on his chest, Martin Dawson began : ' My mother was wise above the most of women, and when a good fairy from the invisible world asked her what she most desired for her unborn child, she at once replied : " Dear, good fairy, pray the Author of all life to endow my child with all wisdom to search and know the secret of true understanding, so that it may know to live honourable on earth, and attain to the excellence of character befitting those who are accounted worthy to dwell for ever in the immediate presence of divine goodness."

' So far, I think, the fairy must have had power to influence the celestial powers in my behalf, for I seem born to search, to inquire, and analyze. It is, however, very questionable if I have found the secret of wisdom and true understanding. Be that as it may, now for the story. Early on a spring morning the first wailing cry of wondering bewilderment which escaped from the infant lips of Mrs. Sidney was in a mud cottage not nearly so grand as an Eastern stable. I understand she was a very delicate child, feeble and tiny to a greater degree than most ; but that wee morsel of helpless infancy is now vast and sublime as the canopy of revolving solar systems, with a heart as pure as the mountain snow, tearful and tender as the flowers in early spring ; and her soul is as sympathetic and vital as the life-engendering sun, and reverent and meek as the drooping willow bending over an infant's grave.

' Again it was the spring of the year, and our portion of the earth, nearing the sun, was expanding its frozen bosom, and shooting up myriad forms of design and colour. Gay birds sang their amorous carols, and wide stretches of blushing primroses adorned the lonely dells and humble cottar's garden. It was when this most enchanting season of tempting promise was heralding in a fuller summer and richer autumn, that George Moray went, by special medical authority, to the north of Scotland. His sensual excesses had brought on physical disease, and to all appearance he was fast hurrying to a premature grave. The subdued inland atmosphere, however, and plenty of new-laid eggs,

Scotch bannocks and cream, and other natural luxuries, soon restored his wasted energies, and promised a new lease of mortal life. In a few weeks he was fair and fat, and as he roamed in unfrequented woods he caught the inspiration of amatory birds, and, like primitive Adam, sighed for a helpmate. As if in answer to his yearning cry, one day a young maiden suddenly appeared, as if she had just sprung fresh from the creating anvil. She was evidently an intense lover of nature, and passed on in her lonely walk as if nothing unusual had been seen. In a moment, however, all the furies of a selfish, all-absorbing passion possessed Moray for the lovely mountain nymph, and he vowed a vow to win the full surrender of all her charms, or die in the attempt. When he again saw the lovely vision, she was seated in a shady retreat, deeply absorbed in Carlyle. She was yet very young in years, but grief, care, or deep reflection stamped her face with all the eager anxiety and passionate depths of a woman's full-blown soul. It was *Sartor Resartus* or the *Tailor Mended* which was arresting her attention, and almost unconsciously arousing her slumbering genius. The weird passion and powerful eloquence of the wonderful author entered into her soul like some subtle influence, and she was longing to be and do, to achieve and conquer. Amid the awful thundering at shams, conformity, passive stupidity, and canting hypocrisy, she could hear the soft pleading music of a tender heart, all furrowed through and through with bearing the sins and sorrows of his people. It was the sublime severity of love; and his mission of labour, his work, work and conquer, hammered and beat at her soul until she thrilled and throbbed with bounding desire, and felt an infinitude of latent power moving in her inner being, and some awful iron purpose steeling her will and prostrating her conscience. Work and achieve she could hear in every listing wind, in every ascending sound of nature; and in sympathy with her noble resolve, she heard the voice of Christ saying, "Hitherto my Father worketh, and I work also."

'This mountain lily was fair and delicate as the opening flowers blooming so lavishly at her feet, and as neatly and unassumingly dressed as the chaste moss which arose in elastic majesty after the tiny caress of her feet. Her every feature was faultless, her figure slender and graceful, and its every motion moved in harmony with the varying emotions of her mind.

'One day, while loitering about to see if he could again come on his divinity, Moray got into conversation with an old woman gathering sticks, who supplied him with all necessary information of the beautiful girl. She was the last of a family who were believed to have been at one time in better circumstances, and who, by her industry as a village dressmaker, was supporting her delicate mother. "She was a learned girl," the old gossip said; "could write and read, and has a strange fancy of wandering in woods, speaking to herself, and reading aloud to the birds. Once in the year she goes down as far south as Edinburgh, and brings home big books that no one but herself can read. Her mother has some strange inward trouble, and Senga goes out gathering herbs for her!" Moray heard enough to satisfy him, and to puff him up that even now he was sure of success. She was poor

and romantic, and must of necessity fall easily into his snare. So he thought and argued, and allowed the foul passions of his selfish lust full sway. For months he had been her haunting shadow, but something in her proud mien always repelled all his attempts to introduce himself. One day, however, when she was on a special herb hunt, he followed her farther than he had ever done, and something told him on that opportunity depended all his chances of success or failure. From crag to rocky mountain she wandered, and the chase seemed inspiring her with its magnetic charms. Heedless alike of time and danger, she hurried on as if impatient to peer into each romantic nook, and gaze on the awful sublimity of every dangerous cliff. O God! she was nearing the edge of a frowning precipice, and Moray stood still, frozen with appalled horror. To cry would more surely make her stumble forward, and, mute with awful suspense, he ran, like one for very life, to snatch her from her awful position. In vain was his haste and eager desire. Some more tempting flower or alluring herb made her venture yet farther, and with a sharp cry of alarm she disappeared over the projecting cliff. Like one upborne by supernatural power, the young lord hurried down the more sloping sides of the rock, and in a bed of ferns, brambles, and rushes he found the beauteous herb-gatherer in a death-like swoon. In the soft bed of sweet-briars she lay like heavenly sculpture, waiting for the breath of the Almighty to infuse into her the awful mystery of life. Moray naturally concluded she was dead, and after uttering a wailing lamentation over her beauteous clay, and kissing her cold lips, he gathered her in his arms and made for the village. He was like one beside himself, and fear and grief lent him unusual strength. The wild excitement pulsating through his entire veins prevented him from feeling the returning life in his fair burden. It was a weary carry, but Senga had only a sort of dreamy consciousness of being in some strange position. She remembered her fall, and wondered if she was out of the body and away in a dim passage leading to newer life, or recovering from the shock and still on earth. By and by she became aware that human arms were around her, and she was intensely grateful for the pulsations of human life she felt beating so strongly against her feeble flutter. It would alarm her delicate mother, but Moray had no time or choice to plan or wait; hurrying on, he never paused until he laid his sacred burden alongside of her mother. The wild cry of the stricken parent permeated the stunned energies of the daughter, and like one startled out of a horrid dream, she sat up and comforted her mother. All was soon explained, and Moray's heart leapt with new joy at the low sweet music of Senga's voice. Both mother and daughter thanked him again and again, and when he went away he was cordially invited to return. From that time he was a daily visitor, feasting on the rare beauty of Senga's face, and listening with rapt but not very pure admiration to her racy conversation and vein of pleasing sarcasm. From the first the confiding heart of the young maiden went out to the handsome and generous stranger. If not wisely, she loved too well, and concluded he was the one man born to complete her life. Daily she grew to love him more and more, but her love was prudent and reserved. She knew he was above her

socially, and she never allowed her passion to forget duty or plan any rash escapes. To the full extent of caste pride and social vices she was an entire stranger. The world she lived in had neither lot nor part with the world of fashionable fables and prejudices, and vain conceits, and mad striving after the honours of time, and she believed Moray to be like herself in everything save the mere accident of birth.

'Moray soon became the worshipped idol of the peevish mother, and with a tact and delicacy befitting a better purpose, he administered to her every want. Rendered bold and familiar by the mother's flattering adoration, and the timid, tender gratitude of Senga, he began exhibiting evidences of his real character and intentions. With keen abhorrence of wrong, she quickly saw through his assumed, sneaking generosity. It was a painful position. His gifts were dear, very dear, to her mother, and if she even hinted that it might be Moray was planning mischief, her mother had no sympathy with her. Thus placed, she determined to be strong to endure and brave to resist. All her trials and temptations made her sink the anchor of her soul more and more within the veil, and God was, indeed, very near her, a helper in her time of need.

'One night, however, Moray forgot all restraint, and storming like an enraged goddess, she forgot even her mother's dependency, and hurled him in the dust, and heaping on him every indignant epithet, banished him from her presence.

'The sudden withdrawal of luxurious support had a fatal effect on her mother, and she sank and died in the course of ten days. With a fearful struggle the daughter managed the funeral outlay; but when all was over, she was so lonely, so sad and heart-crushed, and disgusted, that life had no charm, and she sank into a state of despondency, and sighed for death. The last enemy, however, is not the least capricious of monsters, and would not be wooed to work. Over her dreary prospect, however, she heard the voice of the prophet of Chelsea, with his redemption of work, work, and starting responsive to the call, she began working in earnest. In work, downright earnest work, she overcame all her brooding grief, and banished the memory of her miserable lover. While she worked and meditated, strange thoughts floated into her brain, and visions of celestial spirits were seen calling her away to hear the voice of the Lord God in the silences which flow in from the land that knows neither disease nor death. The voice said, Write, write God's fuller gospel to the people, and be to the nations a new revelation of healing. She never reasoned, or argued, or doubted, but simply obeyed; and as she wrote, the inspiration of God taught her understanding, and ideas and language rushed into her soul, and ravished her with the new world of divine realities. Thus she roamed alone amid a scene of light, life, and love. The very creating power of God seemed in a measure to have fallen on her, for light and all its myriad forms of life and beauty teemed in her brain, and made her pen eloquent with the power and imagery of a great prophetess. God was so completely within her as a living, loving Father and comforting inspirer, that the very garment of the universe became invisible, and all space vocal with the vibrating music of His abiding presence. Her first work was completed, and a second drawn out, before she thought

of publication. Then she was confronted with a new experience, and being completely ignorant of the narrow prejudices and pandering favouritism alike of publishers and the reading world, she was stunned but not defeated by her difficulties. Every step made her more and more realize that the paths of literature are steep and thorny. She had not conformed or set herself to choose a pleasing style, or to measure her sentences to please, but simply delivered her message, and cast it abroad to be accepted or refused. From publisher after publisher she had her mss. returned with an apology for its rejection. It was a wonderful work, they one and all admitted, but it was too risky. It did not smell of the paying sort; and seeing the masses would not purchase sound philosophy, it was no use for a poor author to write common sense. However, she determined to live to make her way. Carlyle had no sympathy with the talent that pines in disappointment and defeat. Even if she fight every inch of the ground, she shall succeed. For some more years she laboured on, sewing all day, and writing the best part of the night; and when she had saved sufficient money to take her to London, she set out, trusting her personal influence would have more weight than letters. Dear heavens, how lonely she felt in that great bewildering forest of human faces! In that bubbling, eager crowd she was fearfully alone; so much so that, as the deafening roar of city activity hummed and yelled, she cried, in sheer loneliness, for a human voice and a human face. There were faces many, but not a face; voices many and loud, but not a familiar tone. In the woods, in unfrequented wilds, and by murmuring streams, she had sweet society, and heard the voice of her Father ever calling all very good; but in the bustle of London life she was alone, and so miserable and confused that she wept like a lost child. Its wealth and gaiety; its reckless indifference, and fearful background of vice and all forms of degradation; its street waifs and wandering arabs, old in face and children in body, seared and hardened into unnatural monsters, made her so miserable that she almost lost faith in her sweet visions, and in God and humanity.

'Her mss. had been lying in a publisher's for weeks, and wearied out with waiting, and her money nearly gone, she fell ill of fever, and was conveyed from her humble lodgings to Highgate Hospital. While she lay raving in fever, a notice inquiring after her appeared in the papers, but poor Senga never heard of it. As she neared recovery she sent a letter to know the decision; and, glad to find the author of such noble thought, my uncle, Mr. Sidney, hurried to the hospital. The old story,—genius suffering and enduring, and growing up, even in disaster, to the full perfection of its nature. When he beheld her delicate, spent frame, and wan face, worn by disease and grief, a great rush of manly love went out to her.

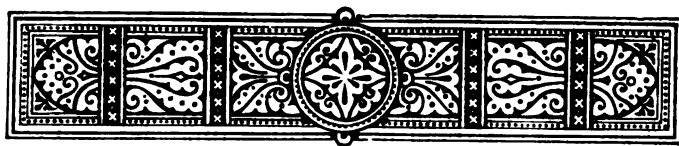
'Uncle Sidney was then over sixty years old, but fresh in physical strength, tender in heart, and bounding in full enthusiasm of intellectual vigour. He had never married, but was not past the age of love and romance; and the delicate young woman, with her pale wasted face, low sweet voice, and sad winning smile, imposing queenly dignity, and great soul of arousing thought, awakened within him a manly torrent of

adoring love. Without delay he had her removed to his own house, and day and night he dwelt on her as the only woman in all creation formed for love, and for the special completing of his life. While her first work was in the press, uncle offered her his hand and heart. She told him she had loved before, perhaps as she never could again, but that the object was mean and worthless, and that long ago she had crushed out her mad fancy. "Dear friend," she said, "I can only cling to you like the crushed ivy plant around a protecting oak. Dear heaven, how I wept and suffered within the prison walls of yon charity institute! Surely the time will come when these huge nurseries of disease and superstition will be unnecessary. Surely the time will come when enlightenment, and cheerful industry, and virtue will banish disease and pauperism, and lessen horrid accidents in coal-pits, and other dangerous modes of industry and commerce, and life become real and beautiful. Oh! how I longed for health, so that I might anew inspire the people with nobler ideas of the laws of healthful life! It is not huge infirmaries, and horrid fever wards, drugs and blisters, and dens of nuns and monks we want, and all the old retail of bigotry and superstition, but plenty of pure air, wholesome food, airy houses, and baths, and corn made into bread and not converted into poison, and schools of art and science. We have poor souls and poisoned bodies, and our ideas and opinions are evidently in harmony with the total of depravity, when we found ragged schools to encourage pauperism, and rear large hospitals to convert disease into a science or a modern fine art. With such thoughts I was nearly mad when you came like an angel from heaven. Now that I am free, I can only say I am proud of your offer, and ready to embark with you."

'Uncle Sidney drew the lovely lady close to his bosom, and nestled her fondly to his happy heart. From that hour a very heaven of pure, perennial bliss was his. Now he has been gone three years, I do not think his gifted widow will care to fill his place with such a rogue as George Moray.'

Martin Dawson drew out his watch, and finding time had been speeding swifter than his soaring imagination, he hurriedly started to his feet, and bade Sir Charles and the exiled prince adieu.





CHAPTER XLIII.

JUSTICE ANDERSON.

CONSCIENCE smitten, my haunting ghost is ever on my track. Both when I wake and when I sleep, I see a hand writing on the wall, and at my side a mocking shadow goads me on I know not whither.'

In one of the most picturesque districts of the Highlands of Scotland, the lordly residence of Rosa's uncle nestled in a retreat the sublimity and romantic grandeur of which could not be rivalled. If there was a spot in that wide range of enchanting scenery more calculated than another to fire the imagination, and fertilize the powers of poetic description, and draw out the soul's reverent adoration, it was the frowning crags, undulating hills, and calm, lovely lochs stretching on every side of the elevated promontory which had been chosen for the site of Justice Anderson's mansion. The nearer surroundings of the house were verdant fields, flowery parks, enlivened with herds of sleek feeding cattle, sporting lambs, and tender dams. On the right and left, shady groves and lofty eminences abounded in rich fertility, and encased the mansion-house like a favourite retreat of enshrined excellence. Around the front entrance, facing the south, the art of floral cultivation gave rich evidence of the most modernized perfection. In short, all that could charm the eye and satisfy the most intense longing for the beautiful and artistic, was spread with lavish profusion. As the eye caught in the transporting survey, serene meditation wafted the mind into the immediate presence of the Author of all beauty, and, lost in rapt reflection, the finite soul finds its highest good in thinking out God's thoughts after Him. It was evident the whole of the frontage had been arranged and planned by a scholar and thinker with a view to impress the beholder with the individualism of the owner, as well as to inspire noble conceptions of the beautiful, please the senses, and stimulate poetic enthusiasm. To the back, the homely cackle of well-fed, thrifty fowls, of all kinds and complexions, and the refreshing appearance of robust kitchen vegetation, lent an air of utility and sociality to the frontage of elegance and grandeur. To the north, like protecting walls around a wealthy city, a stretch of hoary woods encircled the scene, and lent the more mystic charm of forest wildness to the enchanting picture. On each side of the stretching sylvan retreat, there was sufficient space for the intervening arms of sea flow-

ing on, in serpentine windings, toward the rocky precipice hidden in a neighbouring dell, over which the milky waters rushed into a foaming abyss below. Amid such scenes of material grandeur, the seen and realized appeared more awful and mysterious than our most lofty conception of the unseen and consequently less material. For a moment the hoary awfulness of matter chained imagination, and prostrated the soul in lowly admiration. Mind, however, more majestic, soared supreme, and brooding over the boiling deep eddying below, sought and found a more ancient and more perennial source of life. From some great conscious Cause, with thought and feeling akin with our mysterious *me*, and not from thee, O hoary matter! has this grand scene sprung. The most sublime and awe-inspiring manifestations of matter are but the glorious works of Him who revels in the indefinable mystery of life; and that life, all warm with the blessedness of its own original glory, is in varying degrees incarnated in the evolving developments of mankind.

The above brief sketch will give the reader some faint idea of the surroundings of the Highland home of Justice Anderson; and the honourable gentleman was so popular and highly-esteemed as a scholar and high dignitary, that no one ever dreamed of questioning his life, or the means whereby he raised himself. For many years he had ranked among the wealthy, and his elevated, responsible position made people conclude his inner life, like his outer, was a continual round of ennobling pleasure. As a scholar, few could overreach him; and the beauty and exactness of his literary composition, as well as the wisdom and precision of his thought, classed him a man of no ordinary type, and well calculated to be the pride and boast of his patrician sister. In fact, Rosa was almost the only person in his wide circle of public and private friends who regarded him as nothing more nor less than a decided sycophant, degrading alike his original powers and scholarly attainments, plotting and planning for public praise and a high position. By subtle instinct, of her peculiar spiritual discernment, she knew selfish ambition had made him trample every other consideration and duty under foot. Like his party leader, he succeeded as few can succeed, and for many a year he had sat among princes and judges, swaying them with an authority few thought of questioning. Like his nature, his influence was quiet and subtle. His manner and general bearing in public were humble and gentle, and under the guise of the dove he hid the wiles and cunning selfishness of the serpent. With a bland smile on his cold classic features, he made every circumstance and every individual in some way administer to his own advantage. Nevertheless, he passed for a real nobleman and friend of humanity. He was a great orator, a most able and logical reasoner, a subtle politician, a liberal *connoisseur* of art, and an eloquent advocate of education, and contributed liberally to charity institutes. When chairman at a philanthropic meeting, or taking part at a religious conference, he grieved, with great tears filling his eyes, over the many sad and deplorable evidences of evil so rank on every side in our fair and Bible-blessed isle. Like too many, he would do and say anything, so long as the daily papers stumped him up as great and good; and it may be his very vices, which made his inner soul a mass of hypocrisy,

blessed the widow and fatherless. Even the very wrath and evil of men are all converted into good; and the angels of heaven are for ever gathering up the fragments so that nothing be lost. When Justice canvassed for his first seat in Parliament, he skilfully flattered the crowd, appealed to all their darling conceits and prejudices, and was deeply sympathetic with all their wrongs and oppressions. His platform speeches made Toryism far more liberal and just than the most advanced Radicalism; and the people, ever too ready to be swayed by mere vapoury eloquence, voted in a man, with a large majority, who despised them as a mob of silly sheep, selling their heaven-given birth-right for a mere appearance of a passing good.

Shortly after Justice had been raised to a judgeship, Rosa's father died rather suddenly of nobody knew what, and Justice succeeded to the fine estate. For some peculiar reasons General Anderson never lived on the estate, and by some complicated fraud, not long before he died he found he was a beggar, with a heavy bond on the property. To the general, the younger brother vowed to remain single, and will over the said estate to Rosa and the two sons, Henry and Philip, of their deceased sister. It was not entail property, and the possessor had full power to will it over according to conscience. General Anderson being bankrupt, and loving his brother with confiding affection, naturally concluded he would be the best guardian of Rosa and her cousins' rights. In his case, however, even his vows to the dying were made to be broken; and if he was not inwardly happy and blessed, like the man who walketh not astray, he had himself to blame, and not a hard, cruel fate.

Only a few months after the earth rattled dolefully on the coffin-lid of the general, Justice wiped off the bond, and set to refurnishing and modernizing the whole inner and outer appearance of the romantic house and fine surroundings. Then the climax of his fame and ambition was reached, and when he threw himself down on one of the couches of his elegant and costly drawing-room, spasms of mental pain contracted his features. Some unpleasant memories made the blue veins on his forehead stand out all bedewed with cold perspiration; and a corroding, cancerous hunger gnawed in the centre of his heart. Daily his table groaned with fat things, and wine, pure and red, flowed like water, yet, hungry and lean, he wandered among wealth and grandeur; and no art of medicine or gastronomy could send health into his blood, marrow into his bones, or for a moment take from the acuteness of his immortal pain.

Some of his more familiar friends sometimes fancied the honourable gentleman was not so happy and contented as might have been expected. Late in life, however, he married; and the public, knowing nothing of his vows to his departed brother, considered he had acted wisely and well.

In the choice of a wife, the old *Will-o'-the-wisp*, thirst for position and a place among the honourables, made him cast about for a conjugal partner much in the same manner as one looks about for a fertile farm or a share in a long-established business. Of course he succeeded, simply because he always made success a foregone conclusion. His

lady was poor but titled, and nothing more was wanted save a little tact on either side to complete the bargain. My lady was poor, and wanted money. Justice had the latter, and longed to be connected with the direct line of ancient dukes; and accordingly, all went merry as marriage bells. Love might be essential to the poor to enable them to live on their scanty fare, but in a castle of modern luxury (with its ceaseless round of balls and dinners, and whirling from one country to another) it was a relic of the past. Mrs. Justice was, however, a woman of fashion, and not over-scrupulous; and while she despised the old man, who bent his whole soul before mere empty renown, she cast love-glances on younger and more lovable men, and set herself to be a queen in society. As might have been expected, the whole thing was a complete failure. The more Justice stormed and rebuked, the more his spouse let him see she despised everything in connection with him but his money, and even carried on an open flirtation with a poor cousin with a handsome exterior and brainless head. Then Justice's pride was humbled and his heart wounded in its most sensitive recesses, and a fearful torrent of unrest surged through his being. Although he had made a great show of churchism and Sabbath religion, he had lived a practical atheist; and when all his earthly hopes and vain ambitions were turning mere Dead Sea grapes, he had no real spiritual inner life of purity or filial faith to be an anchor within the veil, sure and steadfast. God, truth, and conscience he had hidden away in the heyday of success, and now when the hot pressure of haunting remorse lashed his poor, cowering, cowardly spirit, no Father's love, like a great rock in a weary land, overshadowed and refreshed. One by one all his vain dreams dissolved like soap bubbles, and his airy castles collapsed like wind-balls, and he sat like an owl in a rent of an ancient ruin, stirring round the dry, dead ashes of exhausted passion. He strove to be careless and indifferent, but something or somebody for ever kept asking, What of his life? and when he strove to frame replies, the howling horror of remorse rang hollow through the empty cells of a dead past. Outside his money and mere church-membership he had nothing to offer; and seeing he could not take these with him, he trembled to excursion out of time with a starved, skeleton soul. It would have been nothing to go naked and return the talents as he had got them, all rusted over with hiding away; but around his neck he had a heavy bag of lies, cunning forgeries, and flattering deceit, and with all his foolhardiness he blushed at the horrid bundle which stuck like a horse-leech to his immortal *me*. If his lady was determined to be out and out a woman of the world, he too would drain every cup of delight; and with a desperate effort to win back the old relish for the excitements of fame, he gave grand dinners and gay balls, got up picnics and sporting excursions, and spent money as if it had been dust. All, however, was mere waste of time, mere varnishing of a tomb or galvanizing of a dead body. In private he drank fast and furious, and under the spell of the mocking devil he would play the mountebank king, the winning politician, cheered by a gulled crowd, and the mock imperial judge, angry with crime and loth to administer punishment. Miserable wreck! in all this waste of misery not one

olive branch was seen ; and mocking ghosts intruded into his deepest solitude, and a very hell of terror made great drops of perspiration stand out on his cold forehead ; and his bloodshot eyes would glare and stare as if the sight, hidden to all but himself, made the life recede from his heart, and horror and loathing transfix him into a monument of misery crystallized in conscious flesh and blood. Away from the luxurious surroundings of gilded halls, elegant drawing-rooms, and rich-stored libraries, he wandered like a forlorn spirit among the deeper and holier grandeur of nature's unfrequented shades. Even there, however, the haunting ghosts were on his track, and conscience, like an avenging foe, lashed him with wilder and more agonizing remorse. Above his head a great expanse of ether beauty told of myriad worlds still unexplored, and forms of higher life infinitely grand beyond finite imagination ; and around him singing-birds made the forest wild a very paradise of sinless joy. Wider and more complete expanded the scene of rapturous life, nearer and nearer came the booming hum of everlasting continuity ; and while he loathed life, and cried out for annihilation or inanity, the mysterious lineaments of the spirit-world stood out in clearer and yet clearer distinctness, and beckoning faces of the forgotten dead stood forth in all the radiant glory of immortal life. O God ! he heard his very name called out, and knew it was his mother's voice ; not thundering, however, as he would have wished, or cursing, as it might have been, but soft and sweet as angel's lute ; and tears were in her eyes, and her arms were outspread in yearning entreaty, and kind, pitying words fell on his ears as she called him her dear lost son, and bade him come in and feel the redeeming favour of God's forgiving love. Her love and pity made the wretched man more mad. His hour seemed come, his cup was overflowing full, and at the very pleading love of her that gave him birth he hissed his hate and scorn. It was a woful sight, an outraged conscience battling with the wreck of a wasted life, and his knees smote one against the other, and with bent frame and tottering step he hurried on. Some fixed purpose, or some new ruling idea, possessed his mind, and his withered hands opened and closed spasmodically, as if impatient to do some daring deed, and a sardonic smile played on his death-like features.

'Farewell ! farewell ! splendid retreat of varnished misery and dark despair, farewell !' he muttered in husky tones. 'Farewell, I say an eternal farewell, to gilded halls of selfish lust and dishonest gain ! All my surroundings of beauty and comfort are but Dead Sea fruit, more hateful than the damp dungeon of crime or the disease-engendering hovel of weltering poverty. Even the cell of the condemned murderer has its priest, its sacrament, its pity, and atoning death. But I, O God ! am denied the justice of a bar and the penal suffering of a prison cell. My sins have been too subtle, refined, and well planned for mortal detection. In the name of justice and Christianity, I have grown rich and renowned in every art of selfish unrighteousness, and this reward is hell, hot and gnawing, and I gnash my teeth in very agony of despair, and feel the smarting pain of flames that burn and cannot consume. Yet this hell of pain is just and right. Great Spirit of the universe ! I cannot live ; I have no power of repentance from

sin. Long, long ago, I sold my sonship for a few pieces of gold and a little public applause, and I have no parent's breast from whence to draw the nourishment of never-ending life. I hate myself; I hate the lies and cheats that allured me on, and I haste me to plunge into a more liquid flame of immortal pain, and with my muttering despair swell the gibbering clamour of lost souls who wander far from peace and beauty. Whither am I going? What hateful purpose is this that fires my mind? Ah! I must be mad; and if the beginning of insanity was the termination of all evil and selfish desire, this cowardly suicidal end might be forgiven, and prove a bloody passage to eternal purity and peace. But when I know that the beginning of insanity is the consequence of outraged laws of honesty and right, even God Himself cannot infuse peace and joy into a soul all cancerous through and through with cool, deliberate sin, and I must hurry on to meet my doom. Wonderful old mystery of the starry sky, once like a dazzling peepshow to my infant eyes, farewell! Ah me! I haste to shut my eyes in glassy death, and to hide me in my primitive dust. Farewell, sheep and oxen! gentle beasts and noble steed, adieu! Forgive me, injured mother's love; and insulted friendship, still dare and do. Even in disaster you are victorious, and in the ages to come you shall have fairer garlands than the crowns of kings and perishing distinctions of knavish peers; and love in heaven still shows her torn hands and bloody side, the one meek, conquering sacrifice for sin. Sweet flowers and fruit, and happy singing-birds, farewell! But fame, pride of life, and greedy, selfish lust, I curse you with my last sane breath. Thrice I curse you, as the only devils mankind need fear; but devils real, and far more Satanic and powerful than priestly ghosts of horned head and cloven feet, and Miltonic hosts assailing heaven. Once more farewell, dear, beauteous earth and smiling heaven! Alas! no kind sister waits my return; no smiling home, radiant with faithful love, holds out the beacon light that guides the wanderer home. No loving friend is near to lead me up to God; and even a mother's redemptive love lies stunned and choked, for I have muttered curses on my birth, and frozen the lips that never prayed to God in vain. Lovely Rosa, orphan child of my slain brother, how have I behaved to you! Would I could resist the impelling desire to cut out this miserable pulse of life, and wait to hear the soothing music of your pure love! Would I could clasp you in my death-grip, and feel on the margin of unknown awfulness the enrapturing sensation of your forgiving kiss! Beautiful vision of love and romance, enchanting land of poetry and heroism, adieu! I dare not enter your golden gates, or even smell the faintest breeze of your ambrosial joys. Rosa, child of love and romance, of philanthropy, charity, and heroism, farewell! I dare not stay to meet the consuming fires of your forgiving love and tender pity. Without father and mother, having neither sister nor brother, you live far above the silly pride and prejudice of your age, and progress in a noble life; and your search after truth lendeth you new vigour and new joy, and as your labour increaseth, so doth your joy. Defying all temptation and opposition, you follow close after righteousness, and when weary and worn out by strife and opposing obstruction, you pillow your head

on the bosom of God, and when you awake your life smells more and more of heaven. I speak of heaven, and see it all around in blooming earth and singing birds; but hell's within me, like a bewildering chaos of bubbling misery, and I hasten to welcome the deafening roar of the nearing waterfall. Soon, soon I will have made the desperate leap. One combat with choking death, and then the quivering, trembling peer into the solemn mystery beyond. Dare I advance? Be still, ah! lashing, tormenting thought; fly backward, grinding wheels of Time, and grant me one short hour of innocent boyhood and lovely virgin love weaving a crown of flowers for its May queen. What if I cannot die? Great God, can finite man cut out the life whose pulses root themselves in Thee? I feel I cannot cease to be. Already immortality is springing from the ruin of mortal death, and by necessity I haste into the untried activity of another state of being. Mad coward! I shrink, I rush, recede, and hurry on. If I could cease to be, it would be well; for sleep, dreamless and profound, is rest indeed. But sleep and dreams vanish with the veil of flesh, and spirit wakes to dream no more. Beyond the grip of death, other worlds of mountain, sea, and land, and vaster space, destitute of sun and stars, shut me in with more bewildering scenes of mystery, and more intense despair. What if in that sunless scene no priest, no God, nor azure temple of beauty be found; no fruitful earth, nor singing birds, nor roses with their sacrament of loveliness; and no language save the wailing of a soul alone, feeding on its deathless remains? The fearful idea makes me hurry on. My soul is impure my heart a cesspool of rotten dust and ashes, and I dare not linger longer on a scene made holy by the prayers and tears of God's sinless Son.

For a moment the wretched man gazed into the cold, deep gulf, which drew its whirling forces from hidden springs bubbling in the depths below. While he gazed, desperate insanity gleamed in his fixed, tearless eyes, and a half-silly, half-fiendish smile rippled on his haggard countenance. Then a more defiant and desperate expression stole over the weird, set features, and dark, dismal mutterings died away in his convulsed throat as he suddenly severed his jugular vein. For a moment he reeled and staggered, and as he rolled over into the frothing cataract no weak groan or cry of pain or regret was heard, but as the splashing waters drew him into their whirling eddies, 'Father-God! forgive, forgive!' quivered on his bloodless lips.

'Down, down into the dark abyss of death,' the tall pine trees seemed sighing; and the splashing spray of the waterfall soon washed away the stains of suicidal blood. The undulating hills hummed a hopeful response to the self-murderer's cry for pardon, and the witnessing wind chanted a requiem over his untimely end. When the fuller splendour of mid-day sun shone in on the shady retreat, early snowdrops joyfully opened their lovely petals, happy birds chirped and sported as heretofore, the contented ploughman sang and whistled in frosty fields, the merry milkmaid carolled her love ditty, and the busy wheels of universal industry chimed their usual canto of the psalm of life.



CHAPTER XLIV]

THE LAST LINK IS BROKEN.

MORE than a year had passed from the time Rosa and her aunt realized that Job's tragic experiences are no mere isolated sorrows, but actual experiences more or less the inheritance of every child of Adam. By one fell blow Rosa had been thrust out of the bower of mutual endearment and fond confidence to hear the sad tidings of her uncle's disappearance, and later on to discover that her lover (her king-man and hero among men) had decamped like a thief and robber in a most unaccountable manner. The confused, incoherent apology Monsieur left addressed to Mr. Hamilton, told sufficient to prevent them making any inquiry, or expressing any surprise outside their own fireside. To friends and acquaintances Monsieur had been suddenly called home on official business; but what pride on Rosa's part refused to admit, grief and care stamped on her faded face.

Mrs. Aslawn was, however, well pleased. It was just as she expected. All through she had a suspicion that the French general was counterfeit coin, and just waited until it was impossible to carry his villany further. Hamilton, too, felt inclined to hunt him up and put a ball through his false heart. Whatever the reason of his strange conduct, it was evident he had nigh broken the noblest and truest heart that ever beat in woman's bosom. On that never-to-be-forgotten night Rosa drank a bitter cup, and the suffering was all the more acute because she meekly bowed her soul, and in self-sacrificing love became perfect through suffering.

'Darling Vance, may God be with you,' she faltered as she kissed his last scribbled farewell, and hurriedly made ready to accompany her cousin on his northward journey to seek for their missing relative. When she kissed her aged aunt and spoke some words of comfort, her face was pale and set as death; and as she sat drawn up in a railway carriage, she could only sigh, 'My God and Father, the way is thorny and dark, but I cling still to Thee. The night is dark, very dark, but lead Thou on, and soon the dawning will be near. *Lead on; O God, lead me on!*'

Before they were more than half-way, the newsboys were shouting the fearful tidings of the discovery of the dead body of Justice Anderson; and while Henry continued his journey, Rosa hurried back to comfort her aunt.

'I know the worst,' sobbed Mrs. Aslawn, as she drew Rosa close

beside her, 'and my heart is broken and my spirit crushed. I am trying to say, His will be done, or rather trying to endure this fearful disgrace; for I believe God's will is that we be free and happy, but man's sins and iniquities spread suffering and desolation. Even when I am old and all the keepers of my earthly house are trembling, I am overwhelmed in the mystery of suffering, and on the heaving billows of its stormy waves my quaking spirit will be lashed on the shore of eternity.'

Viewing her aunt's distress, Rosa forgot her own sorrow. Poor dear aunt, if she could but have carried her sorrow! It was sad to see her wringing her hands and smiting her breast, instead of calmly waiting for celestial convoys to come and bear her away. In one night desperate sorrow had so bent her imperial frame that for the first time she looked old and worn, and so weak and tottering that she had to lean on tables and chairs, and started at the wind whistling in the chimney and shaking the windows. The very ring had left her voice, and there was no fire in her dull, sunken eyes, and her proud spirit seemed receding from earth with sorrow and affright. If her pride had been deep-seated and unbending, her prejudice tenacious, and her bigotry severe, in the winter of life all her flagstaves were rent in twain and trampled in the dust, and her idols broken one by one and crushed like rotten reeds. Like a moth consumed by its own vanity, she was laid low, and her grief was as intense and painful as her self-reliance had been strong and graceful. When the glory of patrician birth, the infallibility of creeds and confessions, the absolute power of imperial legislation, and the dignity and grandeur of mere inherited greatness were all extinguished by suicidal madness,—when what she considered the righteousness and just reward of noble living all drifted into chaos and confusion, she even fancied the very pillars of divine goodness were insecure. Her brother's fearful end clothed the earth in sackcloth. Virtually her life ended with his; and when each new measure was pressed before Parliament and passed, and more enlightened men and women all over the length and breadth of the land were agitating for still more liberal government, for the equalization of county and burgh franchise, for female suffrage and reformed land laws; and behind these a still more Radical host, organizing societies and holding meetings for the disestablishing of the National Church, and on every side Synods and Assemblies throwing overboard the most advanced teachers because these venture to say that God is more than a book and the human conscience diviner than a creed, and atheists seeking to sweep away the farce of oath-taking in the House of Commons, Mrs. Aslawn began seeing the first faint rays of the true light which lighteth every one which cometh into the world. The last links which had bound her to the past and perishing had been ruthlessly broken. Slowly but surely all old things had passed away. Her anchor was now within the veil, and she found communion with God grander and far more spiritualizing than all grace flowing in through sign and sacrament. In her young days there were no trades-union strikes, and no rioting lock-out starvation system; few hospitals and fewer ragged schools; no compulsory education; no open colleges for female

students ; no steam engines, flying to and fro like burning demons ; no miles of murderous iron bridges, spanning beautiful rivers, and rending like huge earthquakes to swallow up unthinking mortals ; no gas light ; no electricity, flashing joy and sorrow quick as lightning ; no iron-built harbours as glorious as gigantic ; no toleration of freethinking ; and no men of God advocating the theatre as an elevating, refining influence ;—and the dear old lady felt like an ancient relic in a new museum, and she sighed and longed to hear the splashing of the oars which would row her over to the ever-increasing majority.

'Rosa,' she whispered, 'tongues may fail, and prophecy wax and wane, but the inspiration of noble living shall cast off all human-imposed curses. Happy, thrice happy are they who during all their life have walked under the shining light of God's inspiration ; for those who have closed with priests, and trimmed their faith from the rushlight of creeds and sacraments, hardly see beyond the material inanity of the grave. The heavens are old and hoary, and earth older far than historic man ; but I now realize that the word of the Lord is new every morning and fresh every evening. Not on Hermon's slopes alone, but also on British isles are Moseses and Christs leading the people away from bondage into the promised land flowing with the milk and honey of political and religious liberty.'

Many sayings of a like kind Rosa listened to as she combed the white hair and smoothed the pillow of her failing aunt. For over six months Mrs. Aslawn had been confined to her room, and mostly to bed, and every day told more and more plainly that she was fast sinking into the grave. The hearty, hopeful time when Monsieur, Henry Hamilton, and the Major were their daily guests, and when racy conversation was the regular evening feast, had for ever passed away, and hidden sorrow, corroding hearts, and haunting memories rendered the solitude of suffering very lonely and sad.

Shortly after his uncle's demise Hamilton was rather suddenly called away to foreign service, and his contempt for Monsieur often made him vow never again to set foot on French soil. As heretofore, he was very regular in his correspondence with Rosa, and every evolution of time drew them more closely together. Their correspondence would make a very interesting volume ; for Hamilton's was a beautiful and appreciative nature, and a true progressive element of all manly virtues ripened and blossomed with increase of years, and his Conservatism only retained and revered the good. His more prudential moderation often enabled Rosa to see the error of too extreme reform. Nations cannot be converted or educated into common sense in a day, any more than corn or fruit can spring at once into maturity. Before a purely democratic government can live and thrive, the people generally must be educated so as to understand and intelligently support righteous legislation.

On the very same night that Monsieur decamped like a thief and a robber, the venerable astronomer escaped away to Planet X. Fully a week passed before Rosa found time to call on her obscure patients, and her astonishment and grief were great beyond expression when she found the house closed, and learned the astronomer's remains

were in the grave. At first she imagined she had gone to the wrong place. Robert—where was he? and why did he not come as arranged to let her know if any change had taken place? Surely heaven and earth had conspired against her! At every likely source she made inquiry, and learned from the undertaker that a brother of the astronomer's from America arrived a few moments after the imprisoned spirit had been released. Robert often heard his father speak of his uncle in America, and of course the orphan lad took to the stranger at once, and was entirely guided by his counsel. Therefore no one who had anything to do with the father and son wondered. It was only natural the newly-returned brother should pay for the funeral, and take away his orphan nephew. Rosa, however, was not satisfied, and grieved over Robert as for a lost child. She made strict inquiry at all ports, to see if she could trace an American steamer which had carried anything like the missing boy and his newly found uncle. No trace, however, could be found, and to add to the mystery another remarkable occurrence remained to be cleared up. At the same time the same man, in the garb of a monk, wept over the remains of Polly Smith, and did the same kind offices for her. In her case, however, he supplied a very handsome coffin, and had left a liberal cheque with a sculptor to erect a marble tombstone. With none, however, had he left any address, but allowed them to execute his orders according to their discretion. It was natural enough to suppose the tender-hearted young astronomer would take his uncle to see poor Polly, and finding her dead, if wealthy, he might do such a romantic thing. Still Rosa thought there was some missing link, some other reason underlying which she could not fathom, and she sometimes fancied she would awake to find it all a dream. It would, indeed, be a rapturous awakening to find herself again in the drawing-room with Monsieur, listening to his impassioned love speeches, and to find her fair romance still beautiful and hopeful as a June morning. The slow wheels of time, however, grinded on, and the weary days and the dull dead pain at her heart told it was all a fearful reality; and in the quiet of the evening and on the fragrant breath of the morning she fancied she heard the astronomer whispering, 'Feed my lamb!' and she yearned for the lost boy like a bereaved mother for an only child.

Still she had plenty of work. Disappointment and sensual excesses had nigh done their work in the case of Philip Hamilton, and when he felt he had but a few weeks to live, like a poor prodigal he crawled home to his aunt's door. It was indeed a woful sight that of beauty and youth, and vigour of mind, all wasted by vice, and sinking inch by inch into a premature grave. The die, however, was cast. He was beyond the possibility of recovery, and Rosa heroically set herself to smoothe his passage to the grave. His ceaseless coughing and restless pain were fearful, but she bravely cheered him on, and shortened his weary nights by telling him all the beautiful stories she had ever read. Often, too, she sang songs of victory, and read from the life of Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Poor Phil's was indeed a wasted life, all consumed in drink and sensual lust; and when he reviewed the past, he cursed his mad folly, and groaned with the agony of remorse. Ah! if he could but begin anew, how different he would

live! No two chances, however, are given; yet few really live as if so much depended on a faithful development of the talents committed to their keeping.

'Rosa, gentle cousin, mine is indeed a ragged, besouled soul,' he muttered. 'I now know Christ drew no picture of imagination when He so graphically narrated the story of the filthy prodigal. I have been that very prodigal in every detail; but I now see the open arms of my insulted Father, and my oppressed, penitent soul is heaving and panting to sob out its shame and contrition on His tender bosom of forgiving love.'

Another few weeks had passed, and Rosa was sitting by the death-bed of her aunt, and her heart was trembling, and tears were falling from her dimmed eyes. The old lady was very dear to her. Ah, how dearly she loved her! eternity tell! and she would hardly believe that her best and dearest friend was fast receding from her embrace, and, as regards this life, soon to be like water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again.

'You are weeping, dear, faded Rosa,' her aunt said, as her loving nurse propped her up with soft pillows, and wiped the cold dew of failing nature. 'And I thank heaven for your soft, healing tears. In their shining drops I can see the radiance of heaven's fuller joy. These tears are diamond stars of sanctified resignation. Therefore, weep on, gentle, heroic maiden, for dry and desperate is tearless grief, and the sorrow which leaves a haggard calm on the worn face is heart-murdering. It is many a long month since I saw the softening dew of tears in these yearning, pensive eyes, and I rejoice to bid you weep on. Weep on, wearied, tried sufferer, and when the night is over and gone, you will stand before the King white as snow; and even on earth, in the long years to come, you have yet many days before you; and if you have been perfected through suffering, it is that you may descend into the world of ignorance and evil, and raise up the fallen, educate the ignorant, emancipate the enslaved, and lead the bigoted and prejudiced away from all error and superstition up to full and free communion with God. Now your old companions are all fading and falling one by one, and moving away into the sublimity of the unknown; and as you go in and out tending the sick and shrouding the dead, you appear like an angel let down from the bosom of the Father, with His torch of light and love to light the dark valley, and with His almightiness to row our frail barks over the chilly waters of mortal weakness and death. Over your blighted love and villanous lover you have been silent and forgiving, but the very endurance and meek submission have ploughed your heart through, and slain all its life and beauty; and anew, on my death-bed, I curse the cowardly, sneaking, papist liar. The spear and the sword shall enter into his house, and he will drink the very blood of his country's enemy to quench the thirst of death.'

'Aunt, dearest aunt, forbear,' Rosa gently remarked. 'Revenge is a dry, cankering worm eating out all the soul's noble impulses and aspirations. Revenge is self-murder of the most lingering and torturous kind. We must forgive even our murderers. But you are excited with physical weakness, and not saying what you think and feel. Poor,

dear Vance has injured himself far more than he has wounded me. Pray for him, dear aunt. If you love me, you must pray for him. He was my first and last lover, and even now I love him with a love which is glorifying my life, and making me more meet to join you in our Father's house. You are soon to excursion into the placidity of eternal day, and let your parting song be of charity and mercy.'

'Love, Rosa, must not justify the evil-doer,' her aunt replied. 'True love is as severe as it is faithful and enduring. I shall certainly leave judgment with God, and His wheels grind slow but sure. My departing song is dreary and confused. All my faiths and beliefs are shaking and trembling, and my song is a sort of alarm or wild incoherent wail. All the links which united me to the holy communion of saints are broken, and, like my teachers and friends, I hasten to seek an unravelling of the mystery from Him who will conserve all the good, and blow on the false and delusive until His wrath burn it up root and branch. Ever since the dreary winds sang a doleful requiem over the cold, cruel bed of Justice Anderson, deep, dark, unutterable sorrow has continually gnawed at my heart, and I am fallen like a moth scorched in a flame. Rosa, dear Rosa, weep and lament, for fallen are the pillars of strength, wailing and low the song of triumph. The enemy of antichrist has come in like a mighty flood, and Church and State are looking, like the weary dove, in vain for a sure resting-place. Brother, brother! dark was your fearful leap! cold, cold your winding-sheet! Oh that I could weep over your martyr-bed, and dress willows over your mountain-tomb! No tender love wiped the death-dews from your brow; but alone in the silent glen, hunted by a democratic crew, grief for our trembling State broke your pitcher by the well. Rosa, you are staring with blank bewilderment at my want of dignity and repose. But my soul is consumed with keeping silent. I loved my murdered brother fondly, dearly, and his bloody remains are ever before me. O God! should I find him outside, and absent from the marriage-feast, I will refuse to remain in heavenly bliss without his completing love. Brother, where art thou? Merciful Father! I can only see him in the icy clasp of death choking out his vital breath. Shorn of might and power, ignoble was his dying hour. Like a flashing meteor lost in misty darkness, his star of glory went out in night. Weep, Rosa, weep for the aged man, hunted from his father's home, no son to preserve his name, no honour to immortalize his fame. Philip too, like a tall pine, is wasting with a slow decline; and death, feeding on his youthful bloom, remorseless drags him to the tomb. Thus root and branch are rudely torn, and my funeral bier by strangers borne. At my side lay Phil to rest, like a sleeping babe at his mother's breast. Rosa, call Philip, for my love is strong, and I long to speak to him of the time when the arching bow of Conservatism shone over all the land,—of the time when the word of the king was law and divine authority, when the sword was girt on with might and power, and the prestige of our national honour was a shield to the righteous and a terror to evil-doers. Then we sang the song of kings, and chased the heathen into rocks and dens, and broke their gods of wood and stone, and prayed for them to our electing God.'

'A more glorious song is being sung, aunt,' Rosa meekly replied,

'a diviner song than the victory of imperialism and the cruel triumphs of bloodshed, or the lurid glare of national prestige. In these latter times we are humming a diviner triumph than the gaudy sham of kingly pomp, lordly pride, and party strife ; and a hundred years hence this murmuring hum will be a universal anthem of glorious emancipation. Instead of your so-called bow of arching greed, oppression, superstition, vulgar pride, and fiendish bigotry, there will be unfurled the waving banners of justice, liberty, charity, love, brotherhood. It is not imperialism, nationalism, nor partyism, but humanityism, and all the liberty and excellence of purity, justice, and righteousness we are contending for ; and with God at our head as Father, and Christ as our general, and right in our right hand, and love in our hearts, we shall go forth conquering and to conquer. Aunt, your song should be cheerful and triumphant, for you have lived to see the inspiration of God, like a mighty earthquake, shaking all forms of bigotry, and superstition, and narrow delusions, and complex forms of social and political error and oppression, and soon one and all of these devil-delusions will be swallowed up in a great blaze of heavenly light. You have seen the rush-lights of finite limitations wax wane and feeble, and to hear the voice of God in the garden of the human conscience, to hear the first tinkling of righteousness running to and fro in the streets, and the fulfilment of the prophecy that wise men would come from the east, the west, north, and south, to herald the ingathering of the people into one great family.'

'Call Philip, dear credulous dreamer of dreams,' her aunt sweetly whispered, and a halo of unearthly beauty made her face shine like the sun. 'Call Philip, dear, noble Rosa, and may peace ever sing in your beclouded heart, chilled and torn by opposition and reproach and the slimy trail of falsehood, and rent in twain by the lustful selfishness of fiendish betrayal. Go, call my boy to come and receive my last kiss, for I am longing to see him once again, so that I may tell him I saw in my dream his mother waiting for him at the gate of heaven. Call my sister's son, Rosa. Call him gently, for I am growing wearied, wearied for rest. But before I fall asleep, I say, God's will be done in all the earth. His will be done, even if I be a poor blind bat clinging to old mouldy walls and tottering ruins ; even if I be a liar, raving with a zeal not according to knowledge, let His will be done. By and by I will see clearly. Here all is dark and dim as through a glass, but there we shall see the King in His beauty, and, bathing in unclouded light, shall drink directly from the perennial source of immortal truth. Oh for light, more light ! Like a child in the womb at full time of birth, I am struggling for fuller life and clearer light. I see a goodly company and a great city, but there are dark mists rolling before me like huge intervening clouds ; now and then its light dispels all, and I see it, Rosa, coming nearer and nearer. Rosa, please, draw up the blinds and let in the light. Throw back the curtains, and still more let in the great, free, full light. Let it in, my child ; still draw up the blinds, and let in the descending light of truth. Do draw the blinds, Rosa ; draw them up to the very top, for I am thirsty to see the free, full blaze of God's beautiful light. Still further up, dear child ! Ah !

that is right, let it in ; let in plenty of light, clear, free, full light. God is not stinted or miserly with light ; let it in, so that I may bask in its genial rays before I fall asleep. Rosa, I long to rest ; but when I rest, still let in the dear, clear light of God's love and truth. Let it in, to stream on my closed eyes, and His light will reveal to me beautiful visions of the land of peace. Darling, beloved Rosa, come now and kiss me, and when I sleep kiss me often. Oh, light, love, come in ! dear, divine light, come in ! sweet light of God, come in !'

Mrs. Aslawn sank back on her pillow and closed her eyes, and while Rosa kissed her cold lips, a strange calm settled on her rapt face, and whispering her name in low, sweet accents, Rosa clasped the still form to her sobbing bosom. Then she was alone with the still, solemn beat of never-ending life, for her aunt had gone 'where the true light shineth, and where there is no darkness at all.'

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CHAPTER XLV.

A VILLA IN VERSAILLES.

IT cannot be, surely it cannot be, dear father. I cannot, will not, part with you,' a lovely girl of twelve or thirteen years of age said. 'Father, you know our creed, as you call it, is not of war, and you should have nothing whatever to do with the horrid marshalling of armies. When you are one of the peace party, I think you should be true to your opinions; and when you call war one of the blackest curses of earth, why take a share in these curses? We only love everything beautiful, and every creature, and surely there is no law to compel you to stand up and shoot men dead like crows. It is the cruel emperor who has done it all. He is only happy making war, and you cannot share in his murder and robbery. If the Germans will have our beautiful strip of land, throw it at them, and our generosity will shame their greed. One nation dare not fight if the other will not defend itself, and it must be strange honour which compels a man to do that which he knows is wrong. When I have found you weeping in secret, you have again and again told me false ideas of pride and honour wrecked your early life, and now the same false honour is to drag you from your only child to be blown in pieces, that mad, oppressive monsters may grow fat on human blood and riot over the gains of robbery. No, no, you shall not go; the thought is killing me. In mercy let us fly at once as exiles to some more peaceful land. Father, decide to fly at once, for we are but children, and cannot live without you. To-day let us fly. Even now come and get ready. We have plenty of money, and can live comfortably in any country.'

This lovely girl, with luxuriant brown hair, and deep, dreamy hazel eyes, which appeared as if opened to sing a continuous hymn of love, —eyes which told of fond affection and strong, smouldering passions, slow to arouse but deep and rushing if once called into being,—clung tenaciously to her sire; and as she pleaded and entwined his robust frame, great tears ran down his cheeks on to her angel-like face. Gently uncoiling her interlacing arms, he gallantly led her to a seat, and heroically suppressing his rising emotion, said:

'Darling Daisy, you have spoken a great deal of truth, and I am glad I have such a wise daughter. But even in the autumn of my days, I must trot on at the inquisition wheels of cruel fate and false

honour. Life is dear even to the miserable, and love, the love of my children's hearts, is sweet and precious, yet all must be sacrificed for duty. Daisy, I am a warrior, and dare not fill a coward's grave. While I lament and curse war as the blackest curse of mankind, still in our times it seems a hateful necessity; and even if I be blown in pieces, and left unburied to bleach in the sun, or be eaten of vulture birds, I must answer the war-trumpet, and die with my face to the enemy. This appears to me the most barbarous and uncalled-for war that has stained, or will stain, the blotted pages of France's history. In our times of enlightenment, God justly expects something nobler than a reckless sacrifice of human life for every grasping ambition of cunning voluptuaries. If the people would only educate themselves, only understand that wherever there is the imperial royal hoof, there is slavery and oppression! Our very love of show and war bluster will make our own army crush out our very life and beauty, and all because the majority are victimized by a voluptuous tyrant; and in Germany, too, the same imperial hoof has stamped out the spark of manly liberty, and hung a grinding millstone around the necks of poor besotted slaves. It is hell arising against hell. Germany, free in thought, and chained hand and foot in action, and France, imperial mad and priest ridden, mental and physical slaves: France, red-hot with fanaticism and military fury; Germany, lashed and trained into demoniac determination, with clear heads and cool, selfish oppression,—what a sight! Perhaps out of all this some ultimate good will come; and I will not have fought and fallen in vain, if the sacrifice make a highway for after peace and onward progression. "*Sons of men, arise to freedom, shake imperial tyrants from their throne.*" God gave you a perfect life, a noble birthright; and ignorant of your own strength, you are dragging on, with heavy irons at your feet and burdens on your shoulders, when you should be tripping along singing the new song of righteousness and liberty. In these latter times, with our free libraries, free press, and mighty host of noble leaders and teachers, it is a shame for the great masses of the people to be ignorant and disorganized. With all our unions, why cannot there be a great international peace union? Will a few unprincipled monsters for ever muzzle the great conscience of the people? Freedom! we hear a great deal of it, but all over slavery abounds. There is too much mere lamentation over or unearthing of evils and errors, and too little real action for their repression. No nation should be allowed to declare war at pleasure. Even if it required years of arbitrament to bring about consistent and satisfying conclusions, peace should be maintained. And while sage philosophers and clear-headed politicians deliberated and planned, the wheels of industry and commerce would still speed on, and the counsels of the learned would teach the people understanding, and life would be saved, souls redeemed, and the fruits of the earth left to ripen, and the nation's money saved to build beautiful houses and lay out floral parks, and rear colleges of art and science; and the increase of enlightenment would reveal the horror and impotency of hatred, lust, and greedy ambition, and the delay of vengeance would soothe the spirit of revenge and foster love and charity. Dear children!

in these latter times war must be a fearful mockery and hellish farce when children such as you are arising as avenging angels holding out your pleading hands to God, and with tear-stained faces agonizing for the dying and bereaved, and calling down fire from heaven to consume the Satanic arrogance, devilish inventions, and daring adventures of iron-willed tyrants and bloody emperors. Ever since the destruction of Jerusalem, down to the present day, poets, sages, and philosophers, prophets and apostles, have denounced war as the most insane of all insanities, whose grandest victory is but a bloody, beastly crown of brutal force, whose gain is legalized robbery, and its lasting reward disease, death, starvation, and loathsome rottenness. Still I am a creature of circumstances, a victim of oppressive fate. I am so hemmed in that my light is darkness, and my religion a very mockery. Daisy, cannot you understand, I am a French general, and as such I stand or fall? Even if it break your heart, I must to arms, and defend my country, or for her bleed to death. Strengthen me, Daisy, to do my duty. Pray for me while I go to cheer on my men, to meet a fate God condemns, and makes devils shrink and blush, and feel themselves by men outdone in lust and crime.'

'No, dear father, I cannot, will not understand,' Daisy replied, again embracing her sire. 'Throw down your generalship and be free. If men write over your memory "Coward," God will call you a true hero, and I will write on your tomb that you thought it no disgrace to sacrifice all for love; and in the day when all the living will be judged, you will be crowned a king in heaven. If you go to cheer on your men to a fate God condemns, you will just be adding to the cruel, bloody tyrants. If you go, who will love and watch over Robert Anton and your idolized Daisy? If you are slain, what can we do but sit like two lost babies, weeping in a corner? Do you love your country so much that you can die and leave us orphans? Grandmother and grandfather are happy in their graves; they cannot hear those sounds, "To arms! to arms!" beating in our streets. You have taught us God is love, and the Father of all mankind, but I will not believe it. If He is love, and we are all His children, why do we kill one another? Father, it is not true. God must not love us; and I am so miserable, I wish to die. I am completely weary of life. A few days have turned all my joy and all my girlhood into sorrow and old age. Father, I feel like an old, grey, withered woman. In mercy kill me outright, for grief is making me mad. I hear the mob outside shouting that the Germans are coming in like a mighty, murderous host, that already they are on French soil, and that in a few weeks our beautiful garden will be full of dead and dying, and our splendid villa burned to the ground. Think, dearest father, of the enemy coming in on us, and you perhaps dead in a trench. The thought of you lying unburied on the blackened battle-field is driving me mad. Feel my head how it burns, and my hands and feet are cold with frozen horror. I am already mad, and if you leave me I will roar and yell, and cling to you until my hands will hold on to your very blood frozen in your veins!'

Even then she seemed to have sunk her tiny hands deep in the flesh of his neck, as if to engraft herself so as to defy separation. It was a

fearful ordeal, and as he pressed her to his bosom, the strong warrior shook and trembled like a forest oak rent by a hurricane.

‘Daisy, dearly beloved Daisy, in this desperate game your holy love and pathetic eloquence are lost,’ he sobbed. ‘It is hard on us all, and harder on you, who in all other respects could mould me to your every whim and extravagant wish. Even if God stamp me a mean, sneaking coward, I must not disgrace my name as a general. I have done all I could to stem this unnecessary war; but while other more free nations, with more moral purity and less priestcraft superstition, and all its abominations of fanatical oppression, will maintain a passive indifference to the disputes of their neighbours, only interfering when their own interests are at stake, we will have little save sad reproductions of the old mad game. I have striven to see France free and republican, but her great after-struggle with herself will be to shake off the iron fetters of Romanism. However, only by moderation and wise toleration, and not by force, will the republican party slowly but surely win. It must woo and wait and hold its right, and despise all might and force, and so build up the people in all righteousness. Taking life, Daisy, is short, vulgar work, but saving a soul, and building up a nation in righteousness and peace, are the works of a god. Even now flight is impossible. On every side our country is guarded, and within her borders we must fight or find a tomb. You will not be alone, and, God willing, I will return safe. To-morrow I expect a noble English lady, who is to be your guardian, and I am sure she will be a kind mother. Therefore, “*Allons, courage!*” Be a true general’s daughter, and bid me God-speed. Robert, too, is good, noble, and brave. He has an experience of which you know nothing, and is quite capable of being a true, protecting brother. He is the very soul of honour, and I can trust him all through. With his life and his love he will protect you; and should the worst come, and I die on the battlefield, by and by nature will soothe your grief and renew your hope, and make you rejoice. The young soon learn to forget the old. Life bears within itself a balm for every wound. If it were not so, we could not live. If I do fall, remember I fell fighting for a country I love better than life, for a country which shall yet be the wonder of all the earth. When France is purged of soulless atheism, and converted from theological superstition, and so enlightened that the tinsel glory of military renown has lost all attraction, you must live to teach after generations to forgive and forget, and to overcome Roman oppression and fanaticism by divine toleration and unswerving devotion to conscience and truth. We are a people rich in resources, and as a race we are warm-hearted, ingenious, and gallant; and when we make and mould a republican government, we will steadily progress until we become the centre of civilization and the nursing-mother of all art and science. Now is our day of trial, of fire, and it may be of defeat. We have been caught with our night-cap on, and life will be sold cheap, and sorrow and lamentation will be in our streets. Nevertheless, when you build anew your glorious cities, and raise monuments to the tens of thousands of brave men who have fallen, let your monuments be good for evil, love for hate, forgiveness for murder, generosity for revenge, mercy for

judgment ; and so shall you go forth conquering and to conquer. Be brave, therefore, dear children, and let me depart. If I do not return, I leave you my best blessing, and sufficient wealth to carry out all your ennobling studies and philanthropic ideals ; and may the Father-God ever dwell in you, and lift on you the light of His favouring countenance, and give you peace !'

The father who thus spake was a tall, robust man over forty, but prematurely old-looking and haggard, as if some secret grief had for long preyed on his inner heart, and dried up all the sap of joy and beauty. It was evident life had small attractions for him, and to die for his country seemed a befitting end to his hopes and desires. Whatever the past which had so saddened his life, an infinitude of tenderest love shone in his pensive eyes, and a sort of sanctified submission lent a halo of unearthly beauty to his weird, worn face. Deep traces of profound thought were also visible on his handsome features, and his short-cut black hair and artistically-arranged moustaches were more than half white, and his robust frame was quivering with the force of his suppressed emotion. In all, however, his proud, enduring spirit was still unsubdued, and his soul was all-blossoming with the graces of perennial life. While he addressed the weeping children, glowing enthusiasm and warrior-like bravery shone in his inspired countenance, and the pathos of sad, earnest sorrow made him appear like some seraphic messenger let down from heaven with a special revelation. While the touching scene was being enacted between Daisy and her father, a tall, pale youth stood in the recess of the large dining-room window, gazing wistfully out on the far-stretching scene of picturesque beauty and glory so lavishly spread on every side. Now, however, all wore an aspect of gloom and depression ; anguish was tearing at his inner soul, and the very glory and grandeur of earth and heaven pressed on him like mocking fiends. Although he had not turned round or taken any active hand in influencing the general, he listened intently to all that passed, and a mighty tide of swelling sorrow was shaking his slender frame, and intensity of grief mocked at language, and dumb desperation sealed his tongue.

The general's parting address and blessing had no effect in soothing or strengthening Daisy ; and when he kissed her and attempted to move away, she clung to him more tenaciously, and her cries and tears might have made devils weep. Then the youth's tongue was electrified, and turning round, he, too, held on to the wretched warrior, and repressed sobs made his whole frame heave and pant like a bursting volcano.

'If you go away never to return, dear father,' he gasped, 'I fear I will not be able to be as you wish, noble and brave. It will be easy being loving and faithful to Daisy, for I love her better than I love myself. But if you are slain, all our strength and wisdom will depart from us, and we will pine and die in solitude. Hearts cannot continue suffering for ever without breaking, and even now I feel my own dear father's departure to Planet X so keenly, that I am sure I am unable to bear another dark, dismal sorrow. It may be sinful, but I hate the strange, silent separations death makes. Perhaps I am ignorant and unreasonable, but I think God should allow some visible exchange of

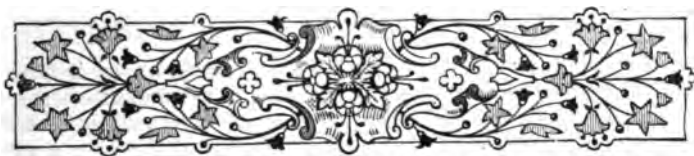
feeling between heaven and earth, or make our sight so bright that we can see the dear spirits of our departing friends coming out of the dying body and soaring away to Planet X. Every day I weary more and more for my father and his beautiful conversations about God and goodness. Since he is gone, I cannot exactly know good from evil. You have been very kind, and I am a learned scholar with a bundle of prizes, still I am unhappy, ever musing over the horrid thing called death; and if you are going away to be shot by wicked men, I fear I will go mad. Oh! my heart is breaking. Earth is beautiful, and your love, and sweet Daisy's, is very precious; but we only love to lose, only feel joy to realize more deeply the utter misery of suffering, and I am weary of the struggle. Father, you are a great general, and can do what you like. Therefore, let us go with you, and the devil roar of the battle and the bloody confusion of carnage will make me brave and heroic. I am a soft, spoilt fool, and need to be hardened by real hardship. Daisy, too, is panting for action, and away among the din and confusion, and the daring and mad adventure of war, we will lose all soft feeling; and when we cease to feel, we will have seen an end of suffering. In mercy do not leave us, or solitude and suspense will drive us mad. Already the servants are drinking and jesting, evidently considering all splendid sport; and when you are gone they will feast and dance, and we will retire, like two lost babes, to weep and sob in lonely solitude. That great woman you have appointed to be our guardian will be too absorbed in her writing for entering into our peculiar sorrow. Do not be angry at my importunity, but I know Daisy will die for want of you. Let us go with you, and we will follow afar off, and at night we will draw near to be your comforting servants, and our loving efforts to serve you will chase away the weariness of forced marches, and the discomfort of camp life. Father, take us with you. I promised Daisy I would plead and plead; and without you we cannot find God, or learn of Planet X. The smoke and anguish of this horrid war have entirely hidden heaven and all goodness from my view, and I am again a poor, weeping orphan boy. Take us with you; and should you be slain by the cruel invaders, we will carry your dear, bleeding body to a lonely, shady grave, and after washing it with our falling tears, we will bury it among flowers and moss; and after singing a doleful requiem, we will clasp each other and lie down beside you, glad to die of cold and hunger. Daisy loves you best, and grief will kill her first. While she lives, I will be strong and cheer her on; and when you are all up in Planet X, tell father I am alone and nearly dead, and coming to finish my schooling beside him. Tell him I cannot get on here at all, and that I expect he will be on the look-out for me.'

'Children, dear children, this is worse than a thousand deaths, more crushing than all the horrors of war,' the general said, pressing them in turn to his heart, then desperately, yet tenderly pushing them away. 'In fact, this is the horror of war, for the lonely, wailing sorrow of the home and hearth is more awful because more prolonged than the short, sharp agony of the murdered soldier. I know, Robert, you will be brave and noble when I am gone. In the future your growing genius will see beyond sorrow and suffering, and you will educate the

people for a glorious republic. It is education we need ; and while all may not be able to sit at the feet of Cicero and Demosthenes, revelling in all the joy and wealth of science and philosophy, nevertheless, in the future, all must be educated. It is education which will develop moral and intellectual power, and raise all trades and industries into fine arts. It is education which will convert the whole world into a universal paradise, making trade, commerce, and all industry, as well as science and art, beautiful gates leading right up to God and goodness. Promise me, therefore, that you will remain just where you are, and by meek submission to what you cannot understand, prove you are far nobler and diviner heroes than the mock dash and daring of blowing men in pieces by shot and shell. After all the bluster about war as a fine art, it is a small matter marching in order to the beat of music, and when confronted with an armed enemy, to rush against such like mad bulls. Pity us, therefore, dear children, and ever believe it requires greater courage and bravery to be a very Christ, giving a kiss for a blow, and when reviled to endure, and return mercy for judgment. Ever remember, those who govern their passions, and dedicate all their powers to goodness, are greater far than those who invade cities and trample out the stamp of life. Robert, like your noble father, live to raise humanity nearer and nearer to the moral purity and heroism of Jesus Christ. If this baptism of fire purifies France, if it burns out its imperial oppression and Popish superstition, I will not have fought and fallen in vain.'

The more the general advised and comforted, the weeping youth and lovely girl only the more closely entwined him round ; and when a startling war message called him away to duty, he again and again kissed the sobbing children, and with the courage and calm endurance of a true warrior, he girded up his failing strength and tenderly bade them adieu. Wiping their fast-falling tears, his last words were, 'God keep and bless you, my darling pets.'





CHAPTER XLVI.

THE CAMPAIGN.

THE hurried, commanding message which called Daisy's father from his beautiful home of peace and love, was the war alarm that already the Germans were advancing, and nigh the frontier of French soil; that already the enemy was coming in immense numbers, and marching with proud, defiant tread, as if impatient to swallow up the vaunting French on their own beautiful borders. Enraged and alarmed, all France was soon in wild commotion, and the speedy marshalling of squadrons told they had power and could use it. Regiment after regiment turned out, and huge moving piles of armed men speedily, fearlessly, and willingly marched to protect their country from the iron-willed invader. Rumbling and groaning like the booming noise of distant thunder, the onward march of French and German troops was heard; and before either had time to estimate the fearful result, or consider the merits and demerits, the justice or injustice of the monarchical dispute, the two opposing armies plunged into each other like mad furies. At the outset the French were hopeful and vaunting, and fought with remarkable courage and bravery. However, the father of Daisy, and a few more reflective and more democratic officers, who knew the true state of the military discipline and want of intelligent organization, had dark forebodings, and considered the war a fearful blunder, far too hastily hatched and rushed into. One consolation, however, remained to cheer such men, viz. that defeat would assuredly bring about the fall of Napoleon; and to those opposed to royalty, that of itself would compensate in great measure for seeming defeat and the horrid suffering of war. In fact, to all interested observers, each engagement more and more gave evidence that France had been caught napping—that its ministers of State had been foolishly ensnared into a hateful and unnecessary war with their night-caps on. However, once begun, it must be fought through; and if it be a severe lesson, it may be the people will more and more learn true wisdom, and refuse to trust in kings and princes. Each engagement gave evidence that the most of the officers were completely unskilled in war tactics, and that the number of the army was no index of its strength. However, to their honour be it written, the men were brave and full of enthusiasm for the honour of their country, but they lacked wise discipline, and many of them were as physically weak as morally imbecile.

Then the jaded, wearied troops realized a great deal more is necessary for the trials of forced marches, the disease and discomfort of camp life, and the horrid suffering of the battlefield, than mere vaunting of military glory. Once far from home, and face to face with the grim atrocities of war, and especially when forced to fly from captured, burning cities, most of them deeply realized the utter worthlessness of mere wordy bravado, and found that even untrained enthusiasm's noble impulses are but passing vapour before walls of well-disciplined troops, all moving and acting in harmony with the command of generals who had made conquest a foregone conclusion, and who were prepared to trample every principle, save lustful ambition, in the dust. Then trembling troops felt how blessed and precious a thing peace is, and how hellish and inhumane the very justice and glory of war, and how intensely agonizing the suffering and misery of a land laid waste by the black scorch of carnage. Then thousands of poor, deluded men cried, 'Why are we here? What have we done that our life should be blown like a blasted rag from the murderous mouths of cannon, and our children and widows left paupers on the cold charity of our murderers?'

'France is menaced, her honour is at stake,' were the vague, suggestive, yet unsatisfying replies; and determined to save their country or die in her defence, these poor men desperately continued the fearful struggle. On, and still onward, marched the contending foes, and not many weeks had passed before the Rhine was rending with the murderous roar of cannon, and the rebounding canopy of space re-echoing the deafening peals; and human life, held cheaper than dirty water, was battered out and trampled under the hoofs of foaming horses. The Germans, however, made a dashing *coup-de-main*, and ran right into the centre of the French troops. Indeed, so sudden and daring was the *ruse-de-guerre*, that terror and confusion seized on the contending foe, and with fear and confusion came defeat. Hell itself might well have stood aghast, appalled at the horrid scene. Never, we think, in all history, had human blood flowed so profusely over sloping mountains and down fertile plains; never before had the cunning hand of man invented and shaped out such murderous instruments; never before had his busy brain devised such gigantic weapons of destruction; and with the advance of civilization and the spread of Christianity came the very perfection of Satanic hate and cunning. Like forked lightning shot from the bolts of infinite cruelty, brains lately teeming with enterprise, busy with commercial activity, thrilling with political enthusiasm, and eager with myriad forms of thrifty industry, and hearts lately warm with filial love and fond endearment, throbbing and quivering with the mystic emotions of ideal beauty and social harmony, were flying in smoky space, and falling on the ground like dense showers of minced flesh.

Now the hungry, sobbing orphan may cry in vain for bread and the love of the sire, and the fainting widow trim her sombre dress, for never again will the son and father return. Never more will the aged mother's heart leap with joy as she hears the full rich voice, and catches the love beaming in the youthful eye of her first-born son; never again in thousands of homes will the ringing joy of welcome be heard, for the stay of aged mothers, and the joy and pride of wives and children,

have fallen for the glory and honour of crowned mountebanks, but not for the honour of humanity or the glory of God.

In every town and village within a hundred miles of the fearful campaign, shopmen, tradesmen, doctors, farmers, and every sort of craft and profession, listened with strained faculties and with quaking hearts, prepared to fly at any moment, leaving home and property a prey to the cruel spoiler, who along with the victory of arms added the rapine of robbery and the vile meanness of plunder.

It was a time never to be forgotten. Delicate women shook with terror, and overtaken by travailing pains, gave up the ghost; and old men and women, unable to fly, cried for the inanity of the grave to hide them until the evil was overpast.

If the French were unprepared and taken suddenly, not so with their enemy. William and his iron-souled adviser, more king than the crowned head, had carefully counted the cost, cunningly measured every inch of ground, coolly weighed every difficulty, and even more carefully valued every pound of heart and brain. Moreover, they had most skilfully observed the ideas, and applied and improved the war inventions and military tactics of the country they first visited as spies and then invaded as grasping, greedy enemies.

As we said, after hours of desperate fighting, complete confusion spread through the thinning lines of the French troops; and no advancing squadrons being near to fill in the thinning files, and seeing regiment after regiment of German troops appearing from surrounding encampments, they fled like frightened sheep before a pack of hungry wolves. It was indeed a dismal, never-to-be-forgotten day, a day after generations will blush to record; and when the crestfallen emperor found himself shut in with discontented troops, and prevented from escaping by the surrounding besiegements of the conquering foe, he began feeling the reality of his position, the vastness of his folly, and the infinitude of the evil his bluster and unscrupulous daring had brought about. On every side black looks menaced him. With Frenchmen a defeated emperor is a mere target for any willing assassin; and if one ventured to cheer and cry *Vive l'Empereur*, twenty hissed and groaned. With all his bluster and cruelty, the mighty ruler was at heart a coward, and so fond of life that the mere enjoyment of sensual existence was dearer than a death of glory. Had he, however, taken the command of the first attacking or defending regiment, and refused to retreat until cut down by overwhelming numbers, history might have forgotten his other deliberate acts of injustice and cruelty, and recorded his name with respect, if with pity and regret. As he came into office, however, so he went off the stage of political adventure, a mere unscrupulous card-player, whose power was only brute force, and whose highest wisdom was subtle trickery and cunning stratagem. Principle he never knew nor cared to understand. Nevertheless, he had the tact and prudence to know when it was necessary to do that which had the appearance of goodness and magnanimity. Therefore, it was only fitting that he should finish his career or chapters of adventure with a stroke of sneaking selfishness. France was dear to him, very dear for the fame, honour, and blazing outlet it afforded his grasping ambition,—dear

for the luxury and homage it gave to his sensual cravings, and for the power to develop his subtle cruelty; but French men and women, nay, the very glory of his name and the inheritance of his heirs, he trampled under foot. To die for either the former or latter was virtue and heroism too high for his comprehension.

In his day of power they had been mere play-puppets; and now, in their day of defeat and privation, he must revel in the ease and indolence of exile. Even if they die in a besieged city like dogs, and eat their own children to satisfy the pangs of hungry despair, he must not sicken with the fearful sights, or for one moment experience the awful actuality of war suffering. In his case it would be pathetically sad to be committed to the earth without the rite of royal burial; awfully sad to be shot clean dead, without tender, loving hands wiping the death dews, and loving lips kissing the icy cheeks. Oh! in his case it would be dreadful to lie a bloody, mangled corpse, slain by mad hate and a childish quibble over a strip of ground; and he sighed heavily for the ease and luxury of a German prisoner of state, and for the dreamy romance of exile. Away in that mystic country (so pious in thought and worldly in deed, so free in intellectual speculation and slavish in action) he would softly recline on couches covered by the intricate needlework of German princesses, and while reclining he would weave ideal romances of mock renown and mountebank heroism out of the curling smoke of sweet-scented cigarettes. Should he feel wearied, he could change the scene by dropping gushing love-notes over the walls of his luxuriant cell; and romantic ladies, believing in the divine appointment of monarchical rule, and eager to catch the least peep of the caged animal, would pick up his *billets-doux*, kiss them in token of admiration; and forgetting sleep and all the wants of nature, these emotional angels would sweetly serenade the croaking owl. Then Frenchmen, too long fanatical slaves of popish arrogance and assumption and monarchical oppression, might look and learn wisdom, and never more bow the human conscience, or prostrate the divinity of their nature, before brazen images of gold and grasping greed. Now that their hero and deliverer has found refuge in a dignified surrender, and their pope, the infallible servant of heaven, is hiding in the Vatican behind the shield of drawn swords and glittering bayonets, surely French men and women will see behind the vulgar slavery of priestcraft and the rotten selfishness of imperial oppression. Now in their day of defeat and fearful suffering, when left alone to struggle for independence and for national honour, they will bear hard discipline with the capacity and grace of true greatness, and learn, once for all, that imperial moonshine and priestcraft infallibility are but straw and chaff, which the breath of the emancipated conscience will consume with its righteous indignation.

While the campaign was at its hottest, and before it had been deemed expedient to hoist the flag of truce, as if viewing a brilliant farce, the emperor and a youthful boy drove to and fro in the far outskirts. They were chatting cheerfully, and the former ever and anon sipped sparkling wines and ate cold fowl and thin crimp toast. The maddening cries, however, of dying yells, and the sickening smell and roar of cannon and

bursting shell frightened the youthful boy, and holding desperately to the carriage sides, he cried to be taken home.

'Be silent, I counsel you,' his imperial highness said, setting the pale, slender boy upright in his seat. 'Lean back gracefully, and fold your arms. Don't you know you are here merely to play a solemn farce? Imperialism is on the wane; but the least show of military bravado will recreate the old thirst for the glory of war. Therefore be silent, you young fool. Spying reporters are on our track, and our every word and expression is magnified a thousandfold for good or evil. If you must speak or cry to find vent to overcharged terror, shout victory. When you want to weep, laugh at carnage, and seem impatient for more reeking blood. Appear to be chatting gaily; but be more intent on watching the menacing looks of our attendants than in replying to my remarks. Therefore laugh, and shout, Victory to France! but do not fear for our life. The moment I know we are in imminent danger, I will gracefully surrender. Believe me, I have ruled France too long and too well for allowing her insulted justice the honour of killing me. I have cleverly swindled them all through, and will cheat them at last. I have, however, yet a hope that I will crush our greedy invader, and his iron-willed adviser; and if I do, I will immortalize myself as the most successful of all imperial monarchs. History looks to facts, and loses sight of motives; it is results, not principles, it enrols, and recognises no success save that which tramples every opposing difficulty under foot, and makes success a realized fact. Were it not so, we would have no hero generals immortalized in stone, no imperial monsters embalmed in blood, but only Christs with bowed heads, broken hearts, and forgiving love.'

The half-whispered snatches of hasty soliloquy were not heard by the quaking boy, and his imperial highness knew not that his words were more true than earnest, and that conscience, sitting back behind the conflicting scene, was its own recording angel.

Suddenly, however, a dashing aide-de-camp, on a foaming steed, rode up to the royal carriage. The noble animal was all covered over with mud, blood, and pieces of human flesh, and snorting wildly with the maddening excitement. Making a low obeisance, the war messenger presented his imperial highness with a small flask, saying, 'I caught it hot and reeking before it had touched the sin-cursed soil. It is half-French, half-German, and seeing you only asked for blood, I thought a combination of contending foes would be more suggestive, and at the same time, give the ceremony a more touching and tragic meaning. General M. thought so likewise. *Mon Dieu!* it will be a significant baptism; and, on my honour, I caught the said blood while it issued from the gaping wounds of two fine officers who had closed in a mortal bayonet contest. They will assuredly die, and their death will render the blood a more precious sacrifice to wash away all unrighteousness. By this time I believe they are dead. Even while I held the flask before their flowing wounds, I saw the convulsive spasms of death painting their countenances with its hateful, pallid hues, and long before this the iron hoof of retreating, riderless horses will have trampled them deep in the weltering scene of flesh and mud. *Mon Dieu!* do you

hear again these dying yells, as hundreds of heads are rent and sent whirling in the misty air? Think of it as we may, those who once stand on a battle-field such as this, and only escape by the skin of their teeth, will never more realize one pulse of joy, even in the lap of mutual love or in the home of comfort. Haunted by horrid sights and sounds, the bloody scene will for ever stand out in grim, mocking contrast, like a death-head freezing the very smile which rises spontaneously to greet the joy of childhood. The truth is, although I live a thousand years twice told, this day's work will for ever cloud the face of nature, and fill my solitary soul with morbid sadness. When I beheld the officers whose blood I caught, enemies in life, yet friends in death, tenderly grasping each other by the hand, and with one feeling of humane brotherhood praying for their wives and families, and cursing kings, and hoping to meet in heaven as children of one parent-God, I concluded this same sorry farce some delusion of a diseased brain. The truth is, this dreadful work, and the touching, dying love of these men, have made me forget I am an aide-de-camp, and speaking words for which your imperial highness might justly shoot me dead. However, one thing I feel I must say; that is, if we are reduced to this sham defence of honour, or this miserable necessity of protecting national interests, this monstrously unjust way of settling all international disputes, let us in turn hasten to the halls of science, to the colleges of learning, to the ambrosial palaces of genius, to the divine temple of philanthropy, and to the holy cross of Jesus Christ, and tear them all in ruins, and trample them underfoot as sublime lies and gorgeous mockeries. If this be the outcome of advanced civilization, the triumphs of science, the results of christianized enlightenment, let us in all honesty hasten to annihilate all which tempts us to believe in the reality of Christ's mission and life, and of the divinity of the human conscience, and the soul's aspiration and capability to rise up toward the perfection of the true, the beautiful, and blessed. If wars such as this must for ever stain the pages of history, and give Satanic hate a complete victory over that which we call good and godly, if human blood must flow like water to settle every childish or selfish dispute, let us have done with all cant and mere mawkish belief in human redemption, and honestly admit that at heart all are for him and herself alone, and the devil for the whole, and unmasked play the game of universal *Diabolos*.

It was good for the aide-de-camp he knew when to make a hasty retreat. In fact, he knew the game was nearly up with his imperial highness, or he would not have ventured to relieve his inner feelings. If the day had not been so critical for all parties, a bullet might have silenced the impassioned war messenger. However, the very desperation of the situation and the surroundings saved his head; and the emperor, now more confused than he cared to confess, muttered, 'Confound the croaking scoundrel! I always thought he was a cursed, cross-bred Communist.'

The war messenger had, however, just put spurs into his steed and galloped over the field of the dying and dead, when his imperial highness took a golden cup from under the carriage seat and poured the blood therein. Then a horn was blown, which seemed to be an

understood sign for marshalling allegiance, for quick, but with well-trained order, bodyguards drew nearer, and the holy bishop was seen riding towards the royal carriage. It was, indeed, a goodly sight. The holy man was covered with flimsy trappings, hundreds of crosses dangled at the horses' ears, and bells and silver pipes tinkled round the out-riders; and our sight grew dim with awe, and overhead we heard the mystic sob of angels' pity. Still greater grandeur, however, moves before the bewildered sight, as our wearied brain catches up the dashing brilliancy of eight aides-de-camp who herald the near approach of the holy bishop. Then officers and men shouldered arms, bowed themselves to the ground, and making the sign of the cross over their forehead and breast, cried, in awe and reverence, some mystic words we could not understand. A wide opening was made for the popish confessor, and his imperial highness next made his royal obeisance, crossed, and kissed the offered hand. Again some words were muttered, too sacred for common ears, as the blood was rendered more holy and symbolical by the magic touch of priestly absolution. Once more, muttering a few more questionable sentences in broken Latin, the holy man sprinkled the wondering youth with the mixture of French and German blood, and in deep, solemn tones these words sounded in strange contrast with the booming roar of cannon and the dying yells of men: 'Great heir to a glorious throne! this day you are anointed by heaven to tread the enemy of antichrist underfoot. This is a sad but triumphant day—a day when this great nation has acknowledged our great head Pius as the vicegerent of God, as the infallible head of all in earth, telling to men the mind and will of heaven; him you swear to obey and protect, and to hunt the accursed heretics from the face of the earth, and so will God guard and protect your throne and person from all your enemies.'

The over-excited boy fell forward, and would have swooned, but the enraged emperor shook him roughly, and held up his blood-stained face to the shouting, cheering witnesses.

Other shouts, however, than *Vive l'Empereur* came floating on the breeze. Even before the tragic ceremony had been completed with a holy blessing and a confirming 'amen,' advancing troops, scanty in number and haggard and worn in appearance, were flying like lost sheep without a shepherd, and another aide-de-camp dashed up, shouting, 'Haste, noble emperor, and anointed holy bishop, haste to the city! make haste, for I tell you there is not a moment to lose. The enemy has made a daring *coup-de-grace*, our standards are down, our colours are trodden under foot, and our few remaining files have sought a moment's breathing space behind the hoisted flag of truce. Haste! for few are left to tell the horror of this day, and scattered foes are lying thick in ambush, and at any moment a stray bullet may be sent hissing through your imperial brain. Haste! oh haste! for France has fallen in an unequal strife. Thank God! our men have fought like true heroes, and stood bravely with their face to the foe, but, alas! few, very few, of our sons and fathers will return to be the joy of home.'



CHAPTER XLVII.

THE WITCH OF SEDAN.

WITH a roar like that of an enraged wolf, the emperor was about to apply the whip to the impatient horses, and make for the city of refuge, when a tall, gaunt figure, as of one who had been disentombed and left an animated skeleton, suddenly appeared as if it had sprung from the earth, and leaping on the back of the royal carriage, it tore wildly at the emperor's hair, and words weird, sublime, and withering in scorn, poured in torrents from lips which seemed to have been touched with a *live coal* from the holy altar. The figure was that of a woman advanced in years, and clad in a loose garb of a wandering mendicant. A wreath of plaited rushes and faded mountain flowers encircled her head like a crown, and her long silver hair flowed loosely with the wind. Her countenance was touchingly careworn, and her sunken eyes were lit up by some consuming enthusiasm; and their rapt, upturned gaze told of a spirit long familiar with fasting and prayer, and of a soul which enjoyed daily communion with the pervading Spirit of infinite love.

The emperor could contend with crafty politicians, elude enraged foes, and hoodwink revolting subjects, but a ghost, a visitant from another world, a witch, made him quail like wicked King Saul. Terror-stricken, his hair stood erect, his knees trembled, and smote one against the other; and with a last desperate effort, he made the air resound with a mocking laugh, and applying the whip to the backs of the horses, cried to his attendants to shoot the accursed sorceress.

'It's the witch of Sedan,' the bishop replied, 'the seed of the evil one, and no shot or shell can penetrate a fiend so incarnate. Let us therefore haste to the city; for I tell you it is mere waste of time attempting to fight the subtle agency of hell. Believe me, she is not alone; although we cannot see them, she is aided by the supernatural power of the devil, and our only victory is in a dignified retreat!'

'Your words are in sympathy with the lying cunning of your creed,' the mysterious being exclaimed in scornful tones. 'Pope-like, you know better than draw the sword against heaven's prophetess. Ah! the sword of the Spirit of righteousness puts ten thousand to flight, and laughs in scorn at the snorting war-horse and its tinsel rider. Your lying tongue has branded me with reproachful names, which, in all sincerity, are your own leading characteristics. This day, however,

know that priestcraft abomination, together with oppressing dynasty, are being gathered by the angels of heaven, like the choking tares, and are being cast into the lake of brimstone, which destroys all the chaff and stubble of superstition, ignorance, and bloody cruelty which afflict the children of men. Fly! mean, sneaking emperor! fly, for your day of defeat and dishonour has come, and the woes you have brought on a too confiding and credulous people are returning fourfold on your own head! Woe! woe to the government whose constitution is established in blood, and to the priesthood whose forgiveness is purchased by filthy lucre, and whose sanctification is monastic morbidity! Fool emperor! it may be you fancied to drown France in your own perdition, but the God-Father over all has not left us orphans, or France without a witness for His glory and the honour of humanity. By the lonely mountain side I have prayed and waited for the fuller inspiration of His wisdom, and His will is that we now see the rising sun of new truth. Even already I see its white opening behind the black smoke of the battle-plain, and the true and good, the beautiful and peaceful, will spring out of the charred ashes of this horrid carnage. Fly, therefore, fool emperor, who clothed thyself with a little brief authority, and hath wantonly sacrificed thousands of fathers and sons for mere childish squabbles and vulgar greed! fly, or it may be the earth will open with devouring hate, and entomb you for a relic of christianized barbarism for after generations to embalm and exhibit in the museum of monstrosities! fly, and hide from the wrath of Him who sitteth on the throne of the universe, whose all and essence is justice and goodness, and before whose awful majesty the princes of the earth are but grasshoppers! Cruel, unscrupulous monster! I hate you as I do the sneaking, lustful crew who nightly prowls the city round, waiting to entrap the artless maid. Haste, crestfallen, trembling coward! haste, and hide from the smiling face of bounteous earth and favouring heaven; haste! for the pointed steel would shrink back, and blush to stab a being so vile; even death, remorseless and famed for insatiable rapine, will turn with loathing and disgust from such a cancerous corpse! Would I could be calm and forget the frenzy of this anguish for the thousands writhing in mortal pain! Would I could forget their dying agony, and the budding life trampled out, and feast my eyes and my torn spirit with the rising glory of the coming brotherhood! France! lovely, unfortunate, priest-ridden France! raise up your bowed, weeping head, and hear the voice of heaven calling you to your mental and moral resurrection. Now you must bear correction with the calm heroism of undaunted genius; and when you have wept over your slain children, you will arise out of your burning ruins, and prosper yet more gloriously in art, in science, in commerce and industry. A politically and religiously free people, we will next be free in trade and commerce, and so will we become the praise and protection of the whole earth. Ah! well may you stare in blank astonishment. These prophetic words of peace and prosperity sound grating and discordant on your ear. Fly, therefore, with your mountebank bishop, who has dared to pollute this innocent boy with such a mocking farce, and seek in exile a moment's breathing-space. But night and day, on earth or in the misty vault of unclean spirits, this haunting

memory will remain your abiding curse. Not a moment's breathing-space will you enjoy, until your wretched, wearied soul has sweat a million drops of burning, remorseful tears for every single drop of human blood which has this day run into the flowing Meuse, or sunk into the groaning bosom of outraged earth.'

Tossing a handful of the emperor's hair scornfully to the wind, and wiping her hands as if the very touch was foul pollution, the mysterious visitant leaped off the speeding carriage, and disappeared among the horrifying heaps of dying and dead.





CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE BATTLE-FIELD.

WHILE stray shots continued to be fired from miscreants lurking in ambush, and fiendish plunderers, dead to every hallowed feeling, picked the pockets of the dying, and tore off all valuables from the dead, the strange woman with weird appearance came suddenly on the scene, and soon hunted the plundering cowards from the field. Surely she must be a ghost or witch—one of those spiritual seers who make cowards alike of murderers and sensual hypocrites! For a moment she smiled at the weak superstition of the terrified soldiers; but when she viewed the full extent of the horrid work of the cruel invader, she anew became enraged, and hurled after the retreating thieves more fearful and withering woes than those pronounced over the trembling mighty men. During years of solitary meditation it was evident the rapt prophetess had learned the secret of divine wisdom; and the inspiration of the Almighty had made her strong in mind and heroic in spirit. Her life was sacred with a mission, sublimely grand with a noble purpose, and it might be she was no witch or ghost, but a true, tender sister of humanity, heartily weary of all glittering hypocrisy, and longing to infuse into the benumbed centre of modern pharisaism a degree of the life and sincere purity she had drawn from the infinite Source of all goodness. Perhaps no nation is ever entirely destitute of some voice crying in the wilderness, laying the axe at the root of the vices and crimes of each generation, and heralding in higher developments or newer discoveries of the truth of religion, the truth of science, the truth of art, and the truth of commerce and industry. Sometimes, like the so-called witch of Sedan, and the severe forerunner of gentle Jesus, these wilderness teachers are plain of speech and stern in judgment; nevertheless, they are not so either by choice or inclination, neither are they in any wise destitute of love and mercy. It is the stern necessity of fate which compels these remarkable men and women to cry aloud, and to strike with the hammer of the word of truth right on the inner hearts and consciences of men. At heart these heroes of heaven are tender and tearful as the flowers in spring, with a great furnace of love and pity burning, like a hidden volcano, in the inner centre of their being.

So it was with the witch of Sedan. When she had chased the cruel

plunderers from the field of the sacred dead and agonizing dying, her judgment was exhausted, and great tears of tenderest pity ran down her withered cheeks. She was evidently a woman of action as well as words, and she lost no time in mere emotional sorrow, but at once set to performing deeds of love and mercy to the blackened masses of gallant men writhing in painful death-throes. With remarkable rapidity that wonderful woman collected pieces of linen and cotton from the shattered remains of the actual dead, and began binding up the wounds of those most likely to live. It was, indeed, trying work for the strongest, and she strove to stop her ears to the heartrending moans of suffering men, calling frantically on death to end their fiery torment. Nevertheless, the holy prayers offered by those able to snatch a moment's respite were even more touching and tragic than the groans and moans of the dying. Like arrows winged direct from the heart of God, these awfully earnest, simple prayers went home to the heart and conscience with a force and power far more convincing than the cold, measured eloquence of mere intellectual thought. In such suffering the holy mystery of the soul's divinity stands out like a rainbow in the vault of space. Not for themselves were these suffering men praying, but for their wives, their mothers, their friends and companions, and for their country, and the very enemy; and their brotherly love and tender, self-forgetting beneficence rendered the scene still more chaotic and intensely insane. Some, however, there were who could neither pray nor hope. With these the awful agony of physical suffering, the dismal surrounding of blackened massacre and horrid devastation, shut out the very consciousness of God and all belief in immortality; and to such the glorious surprise of eternal blessedness would steal over the emancipated spirit like an enrapturing dream—a dream, however, with no dark night and no sad awakening.

Among a heap of these mangled masses of suffering men, the busy sister of mercy discovered a general of marked distinction, who had been shot in the left side, and whose undressed wounds were bleeding profusely. Beside him lay his dead horse, with its glassy eyes fixed in tenderest pleading on its wounded master. In fact, the general's body was all over shattered with shot, and he was, to all appearance, dying. He was, however, acutely conscious of all that was going on, and busy taking into his memory every detail of the woful surroundings. His active mind and heroic spirit were still engaged endeavouring to estimate the amount of evil wrought by such insane blundering, and striving to think out some rational and intelligent mode of political government somewhat in harmony with the requirements and enlightenment of modern civilization. Physically he was prostrate and feeble as a child, but his unconquered spirit was reflecting and praying, and his prayer was for his beloved country, and the slow, mournful pathos of the solemn invocation made the strong-minded woman reel and stagger; and when the noble warrior dedicated France and a beloved child in one sentence, and with equal love and veneration, to the great Father of humanity, she smote on her breast, and yet once again called from heaven even more blasting woes on bloody emperors, vain, ambitious kings, and daring adventurers, who aspire to lead nations with no

higher motives than mere crown prestige and self-glorification. Her passionate declamation over, she gently approached the king-man, robed in blood, and all quivering with the fires of consuming torture. His silent, un murmuring endurance was more touching than groans, and for a few moments their eyes met in speechless sympathy. Expression seemed denied to both; and the woman sank on her knees, and tenderly clasped him to her bosom, and sobbed over his torn body like a loving, bereaved mother mourning the loss of a darling son.

It was the father of Daisy who was thus clasped in the pitying embrace of the tender stranger, and who was to all appearance dying on the cold, muddy bed of a battle-field. Where now are those young mourners who clung so desperately to his trembling knees, and made him drink the very bitterness of death before he had bidden home adieu? It may have been Daisy's yearning prayer that imparted strength to the enduring warrior; it may have been her spiritual reciprocity which drew the strange sister to her wounded sire's side.

On every side of the bleeding general there were scenes far too horrible and appalling for description, and in pitying charity for the fearful blundering of unscrupulous rulers, we draw the curtain on the more horrible sights, and refuse to narrate the most woful wails and cursing speeches of slaughtered men, weltering like moving masses of hacked worms. The groans, prayers, and curses of the wounded so confused and overwhelmed the general, that he too seemed rushing into the chaosism of insanity, and he cast the gift of life from him as a miserable mockery. For a time God, goodness, veneration, and all the beautiful graces and noble purposes of life became horrid, tormenting myths—mere vain, delusive dreams, and man, in his best estate, but vanity. The ideal sinlessness which he aspired after, the hidden wisdom which he regarded as the pearl of great price, the moral and mental liberty and the social equity for which he had lived, and for which he had willingly poured out his blood,—all appeared like grim, glaring fiends and ghosts; and shading his eyes as if to shut out the tormenting sight, he muttered, 'Why need I pray? why hug the silly delusion any longer? In all this dreary waste of hell I cannot find one footprint of a God of love, and my orphan soul is for ever lost amid encircling darkness. Here the mystic inspiration of love lies cold and dead, and the very honour and glory of father and motherhood a poor impotent rag. All I have worshipped as the true and abiding is swallowed up in abysmal despair; my troubled spirit is engulfed in a booming immensity of mental and physical agony, and my quivering, never-dying consciousness has made its bed in the deepest hell. Do not attempt to staunch my wounds, but in mercy let me die in haughty, defiant scorn. One comprehensive gaze across this battle-field has annihilated all I once knew and believed of God and good, and the redemption of the human soul from evil. Therefore, dear sister, in mercy withdraw your anxious pity, and let me harden myself in scorn, and curse the mysterious power which lent me life, and crowned the mockery with a soul yearning and overflowing with tender love. Life, what is it? A lie, a cheat, an organized mass of insanity! and love a fiery torment, exhaled from hell! Yet, alas! poor,

weak, confiding fool, the very mystery I scorn and despise grows yet more complex, and my tender, tearful part still yearns for the communion of mutual love. Yet once again I roll this infinite mystery round my inner conscious *me*, and hug it even in this hell of hate and pain. Yet once again my dry, aching heart sighs wearily for one soothing kiss of pure, fond love; and while I refuse to hope or pray, I crave from some unknown Almighty Cause the power to read again this priceless letter.'

A tiny letter was clasped in the general's hand, and ever and anon he strove to trace the lines and catch the meaning of every sentence of its faithful love. 'Like a sensible man, have some wine,' the sister of mercy said, pausing in the dressing of his wounds to comfort and support his overcharged spirit. 'If you can swallow, drink freely, and when the exhausted, enfeebled brain somewhat recovers from this shock, reason will again sit on the throne of the intellect, and enable you to divide the light from the darkness. At present I do not wonder that your lamp of faith is extinguished, but the fire of divine inspiration will yet blow on your inner soul, filling it with diviner and clearer light. This blackened scene of charred death might well make God himself incoherent, and all the Christs who ever lived give up the ghost, and cry they are forsaken. However, cheer up! *allons! courage!* this is but another outpouring of the vials of evil which prelude the glorious day when nations shall study war no more. The future has much of blessing for humanity; and while in some respects ours is a glorious advanced age, in many respects it is semi-barbarous. Now religion, pure and undefiled, is warring with bigotry, superstition, and soulless formality. We have been fed on the husks of mediævalism, and on every side the starved soul is looking for more spiritual and satisfying food; and, weary of insincerity and hypocrisy, men and women are longing to be true to themselves and their neighbours. Do not despair, noble warrior; you have not fought and fallen in vain, and the clouds of heaven are big with a mighty revolution of political and religious thought. Not in our land only, but all over Europe, nay, in America, monarchical oppression, creed, religion, and churchism hypocrisy, all is rending and tottering, and the enslaved human conscience groaning and travailing in pain to be delivered. Religion is the homage of the conscience to truth; but truth is many-sided, and the true truth-seeker must seek the all of truth. Our individual *me* may be said to be fourfold in its intellectual organism or essence—*i.e.* the mind in its grasping, inquiring powers of research and invention; the soul in its reverent aspiration after the infinite, the unseen, the ideal and spiritual; the conscience in its rectitude of righteousness and judgment; and the heart in its infinitude of feeling, with its awful mystery of love and pity, and even more mystic mystery of suffering and sacrifice. Therefore the true truth-seeker must seek the highest truth of religion, of science, of morality, and of social equity; and when these are better understood, more harmoniously united and wrought out in actual life, men and women will be growing nearer and nearer to the perfection of their being. However, I must not ramble on, but remember my present duty is simply to nurse the sick and stem the wounds of the

massacred. Take another draught of wine, beloved general, and cast your frantic scepticism to the wind. Believe this fair universe never evolved itself out of liquid gas without the intelligence of a great arranging Power, and be assured this scene and all its horrid injustice will be rectified, and not one single unit of life so ruthlessly stamped out but will be gathered up by that same Power and completed in all excellence. After the storm comes the calm, after toil rest and sleep; and you will see in your dreams the golden city, and feel God, even your Father, wiping away all your tears and vain sorrows.' Tears soft and refreshing as summer rain ran from the eyes of the general, and washed away the mud and blood from his pallid cheeks.

'If your prophetic words be true, dear unknown stranger,' he gasped, 'I shall gird on victory like a helmet of strength. France is engraven on my heart; and if it be that there is a glorious future for my unfortunate country, I will indeed say, like the disciple of old, "Now, O Lord, let Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation!"'

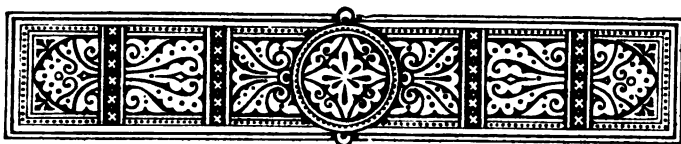
'I am indeed glad to hear you thus speak,' she replied. 'However, you may yet recover and help still further to work out the salvation of your country; and in order the more to raise your mind and make it pulsate your enfeebled body with a degree of its immortal vigour, I again assure you that the human soul is progressing upward and onward, and slowly but surely unswaddling itself of myriad forms of evil and ignorance. The truth is, I might say ignorance is evil; and a universal knowledge of what is really the highest good for every individual will overcome almost all evil. It is our present attained enlightenment which makes wars such as the present so very hateful and intensely sinful. When our light is darkness, how great is that darkness! However, the very fact that unscrupulous rulers can in a few days marshal vast troops of men ready to slay one another, and find the majority of the people willing to vote them millions of money to carry on such unrighteous wars, is sad evidence that the majority are yet the great *unlearned* as well as the great *unwashed*. On every side we want education to enable the masses to find by self-culture and self-help what they foolishly clamour for from party-serving governments. It appears to me self-help is the only redemption heaven aids. In some dim way I have ever realized willing, healthy, honest work is the sacrifice which takes away sin. It is education which will greatly help to take the scales from the mental eyesight; and once the divine ray finds its way through the creaks and dusty panes of the encrusted intellect, the majority (now either fanatical bigots, sectarian zealots, or dumb driven cattle) will be living, intelligent units, thinking and acting according to conscience. Therefore, do not despair, for we are drawing near to a great social and religious resurrection. The end of mere rites and ceremonies is close at hand. God is wearied with the offering of blood, blood, and His fatherly heart is aching for the diviner sacrifice or sinless lives.'

While the wonderful woman spoke, she was busy dressing the rent body of the bleeding general. Her full mind required no preparation, no special opportunity to draw out its rich store of rare thought and

feeling ; nevertheless, the many gaping wounds of the enduring warrior made her ever and anon falter in expression as she strove to choke the up-heaving rush of indignant sorrow which swelled her heart. Many years prior to the events just narrated, a great family affliction made her flee to solitude to mature her mind in all wisdom, and devise means whereby she might arouse her country to cast off all religious and political oppression. It was evident she was a woman of education and refinement. Her hands were small and active, and her words earnest and inspiring, and they sank into the troubled spirit of the fallen general like the ambrosial breath of summer. Her voice, lately so sharp and severe, and so ironical and sweeping in condemnation, was now trembling and timid, and vocal as a heavenly lute ; and her grief-worn face shone with surpassing beauty, and youthful sweetness played around the curves of her chiselled features.

‘Real life is the only romance worth recording,’ the wounded man thought, as he listened like one in a dream, and strange wonder sealed his tongue. He must after all be dreaming, and, as of old, dreaming of some noble woman whose spiritual beauty had enamoured his whole soul. If dreaming, then, O Heaven ! forbid that he should ever again awaken to the icy isolation and mad frenzy of friendless death. From the depths of hell he had cried for one ray of love to ease the pangs of his immortal hunger, and again and again he fervently blessed the accents of dear human love. It was no dream, no sensational picture of imagination, but a real human experience ; and when his physical sight grew less dim, he could see distinctly the outlines of a human face and form, and when she cleared away the mud from the clasped letter, he began spelling out every precious word of the blood-stained epistle. To one like Monsieur, formed for energy and action, it was peculiarly strange to be lying helpless in midst of such surroundings, with a mud pillow, and canopied space his curtain. No wonder, therefore, that sorrow nigh broke his heart when he began reading the wailing message of his beloved Daisy. In every passing breeze his sensitive soul fancied he heard the echo of her doleful cry, and in his feeble helplessness he suffered an eternity of distress. Not yet was his time for rest and sleep, for the internal contest of bereaved yearning love was a thousandfold more agonizing than the darting pains of his torn body.





CHAPTER XLIX.

THE CLASPED LETTER.

DEAREST, dearest-beloved father, we are now impatient beyond all endurance, and nearly mad. If a message or letter be much longer in reaching us, we will either die of suspense or become raving maniacs. Old people tell us to be patient, and have the common sense to trust in God, leaving all to Him; but we are not old, and even if we were, I do not wish to be so sensible as be indifferent about the absent, especially when these are exposed to danger. If God does not work all out to our joy, I wonder what pleasure will I have in finding His will has robbed me of all I love? Whatever other people think, I am convinced my duty is to weep, and watch, and pray, and exert my every energy to hear of your safety. Each new morning we only hear fresh horrifying tidings; and knowing you are at the seat of war, actively engaged in quick succeeding campaigns, we are beside ourselves with suspense and sorrow. Sometimes we cease hoping, and feel confident you are either among the slain or mortally wounded, and that our few friends are in mercy withholding the dismal intelligence. Surely this is not what God intended or foresaw when He made mankind? Ah! dearest father, could we have only known a few months ago, when so gay and light-hearted, of this fearful desolation, our song of mirth would have been a wail of distress, and all our time spent in prayer that God might save us from such a horrible necessity. I am sure had all France been in earnest for goodness, Heaven would in some special way have defeated our enemy, and turned aside the chariot-wheels of war. But we have either been dreaming in sinful indolence or rushing on in vain frivolity, and we are carried away like straw or chaff to be blown from the mouth of a cannon. What a state, condition, or end, for creatures made in God's image! These, dearest father, are the ideas of our guardian, Mrs. Sidney, and sorrow has made me so wise that I believe them true. Would you believe, I have suddenly grown to be a woman! I was a mere child when you left. Now I am almost aged and grey with grief. How fast the soul grows in the forcing pit of affliction! Perhaps it is better that we are ignorant of the future. Yet when great sorrow, and sudden, sweeping misfortune overtake us, we cannot help thinking it would have been better and juster had we been in some way prepared for it. Ah! I hear you say,

God may have been warning us in many ways for long, having even resort to dreams to open our blinded sight, but that, drowned in ease and frivolity, we would listen to nothing save selfish inclinations. If such be the true version, then I suppose I must conclude our present suffering is the direct result of our own conduct. Yet surely we children might be excluded, seeing we had no actual say in the matter.

'What scenes of social disorder are daily enacted here! The city is full of riot and mobbing drunkenness, and rash, uncalled-for cruelty. Perhaps the poor creatures are glad to drink and forget their misery. It is a horrid idea, yet I confess I went last night to the cellar to get brandy, that I might deaden my sorrow. Something, however, whispered it was a sinful, cowardly thing to try to escape from pain.

'Between one thing or another, within and without is one surging scene of conflicting misery, so much so that no historian will ever gather up half of the sad details. Almost every hour fresh bills are posted up, saying the Germans are coming in like a flood, sweeping all before them. What have we done that fair France should be trampled in the dust? Will the rich fruits of the earth not smite the heart of the invader as the war chariot tramples the rich beneficence of God in the dust? Father, dearest-beloved father, these ideas are driving me mad; I have thought and thought until my heart is breaking inch by inch. Its cords are worn and weary; faintness often makes me stagger and fall. Time hangs so heavy that every day seems a thousand years. Robert is even worse than I am. I never thought he was so sensitive; never knew till now that he has been hiding beneath seeming resignation a deep, undying sorrow for his departed sire. However, he is neither weak nor impatient, but his grief has an intense realness, a quiet earnestness which terrifies me. I sometimes do mad tricks, and say strange things, to see if it be possible to mantle his pensive features with a smile. I cannot tell you what he is like. I wish you could see him walking to and fro, and when he thinks no one is listening, speaking strange, solemn words; and sometimes he appears fighting some unseen, present spirit, for he strikes with his closed hands, and stamps his foot. He is a strange boy. Whatever others think, I am sure he is taught by God for some special work. He knows almost everything; I never knew such a wise boy. He calls war the merry-making of fiends and devils, and the beginning of war the invention of insane idiots, and says God never intended emperors and kings to rule over the hearts and minds of men. If that be true, why do you and all other military men consider yourselves duty bound to go and slay living men at the call of any emperor? I think the noblest duty of every man is to obey the voice of conscience, which tells us we must do justly and love mercy. We do not hate the German people; and why should we murder the fathers of so many dear children? Do as I may, I cannot understand what it means. It is all a horrid mystery. Are you all mad alike, that you refuse to exercise the great gifts God has given? Emperors can do nothing if the people combine in one cause, therefore the people must be as unjust and bloody as the emperors.

'Something is wrong somewhere, but I cannot explain what it is, and only wish I had never been born. We are, however, trying to be brave

and enduring; and morning and night we kneel together, and Robert prays aloud, and while so engaged we both grow stronger and wiser. Then we converse on spiritual things, and I feel God comes into my inner spirit, and teaches me much I could not gather from books or other teachers. Often, often I realize my heavenly Father very near, and oh, what delightful, wonderful thoughts come stealing into my mind! Then I see far beyond this world, right into another great world with solid foundations, where God is gathering all the children of earth. We cannot sleep, and we sit late out of bed, and while we sit gazing up at revolving worlds, Robert teaches me the science of astronomy. I am now what he calls an advanced pupil, almost ready for a degree. He says I am a born scientist, and that I can travel from planet to planet with the ease and grace of one hoary with study. Some are born to paint, some to sing, and some to write words of wisdom, but he says I am born to question, to search out and bring to light. I feel it so far, because I am never so happy as when overcoming some difficulty, or seeing into the heart of something imperfectly understood. Astronomy is indeed a wonderful science, revealing the completeness of creation. How erect and majestic it makes the soul! Some day Robert will be a great man. He hopes to discover the pathway conducting to Planet X; then we will understand how the spirits of departed friends find their way home. Were it not for these studies, and the joy they impart, we would be raving maniacs.

They do not, however, deaden the acuteness of grief, and not a moment passes without us hearing the booming sounds of war, and every rebound proclaims desolation and death. Now it is a rending cannon roar, then a mad yell from the frantic crowds gathered on the streets, and we in turn feel all courage forsaking us, and run from one side of the house to the other, feeling like caged birds beating against the iron sides of fate. Sometimes I am awfully weak—so weak and trembling that I am afraid you would blush to own me your daughter. Grandma used to say I was a true general's child, all bold bravery through and through. Could she see me now she would change her opinion, and with her characteristic pride of warlike renown, lash me into order by ironical contempt of my sentimental weakness. I know it is neither fashionable, ladylike, nor patrician to allow feeling to show the least naturality; but I confess I shall never be fashionable or ladylike in that respect. The more I am lectured the more I cry for my dear, dear father to come home to his weeping Daisy. Mrs. Sidney is indeed a dear, kind, wise lady, and is training us in all perfection. She looks over all my written exercises on music and astronomy, even my letters, and will not allow them to pass until she considers the composition artistic. She calls me a ready-made authoress, forgetting all the while how she has drilled me until I am part of herself. She is for art in everything, ever telling us every simple exercise as well as book should be a representation of art, unique after its kind, and according to its purpose. All other forms of writing she condemns as mere waste of time, and so much of useless deformity cast abroad on the world. In all she is for beauty, strength, utility, and harmony.

'In regard to domestic affairs, the servants will obey no one; and

Mrs. Sidney is so engrossed answering political leaders and such like, that she tolerates all that is at all bearable. However, she never forgets to educate Robert and me in all goodness. The truth is, she is a loving, kind mother, and we owe her very much. When you come home you must not forget to reward her for this devotion to duty.

'I know you will hardly believe me when I attempt to describe the social misery which is hemming us in, and people are whispering that we will all be starved to death. Social confusion is rolling up to the very door, nay, to the very fireside, and partyism making brethren hate the children of one mother, and not a few come to sad deaths for free opinions expressed. It is something dreadful; as I said, I cannot understand it; and while I write, tears are blinding my eyes, and my heart is all quivering with pain. How is it you cannot find some means to send us a letter? Surely no one is so false as keep your communications? In mercy, try and find out some means and send some message to say you still live. Have you no pigeon-carriers? no outpost? nothing but isolated entrenchment, keeping powder dry, and cannon ready to blow human life and love in shattered fragments? Delicate women and old men are dying by the roadside flying from the enemy. I must, however, cease attempting to narrate the horror and misery, and all I suppose for a bit of ground.

'Robert joins me in sending all the love of our sad, broken hearts, and on spiritual wings I hasten to nestle one hour in your bosom. Oh that I could feel in reality your warm kisses reassuring me that I am not a poor, forlorn orphan! What if you are among the slain! The idea is too horrible, yet it haunts me continually, and I see your pale, dead face for ever by my side. So sure am I that you are among the wounded and dying, that the ever-ascending prayer of my aching soul is, that God send some kind, ministering angel to bind up your sores and speak words of love and sympathy. Away in Planet X you will be reunited to mother, and all your sorrow will be over. In heaven, however, think of your left Daisy and her foster brother, and come in spirit and help us to understand the meaning of life.

'Robert is indeed a noble youth, far better and greater in soul than I am; and when I am wayward and very defiant, almost hating God, and everything, I fancy, comes between me and my wishes, he comes and turns my scorn and rebellion into a song of submission. I never knew such nice tact as he possesses. His power in applying his knowledge is such that it carries all before it, and he sings with such touching feeling, and has such a charming way of telling endless stories about the planets,—how they sweep in space, and what they are like, both when perfected and when in a state of preparation for sustaining life or shooting out light, and of eternity and the glorious way we will be employed in Planet X, that I am carried out of myself, and forget for a time to sigh and start. He calls me his enchanting fairy, but it is himself who possesses the magic wand.

'We are making such rapid progress in learning, you will not know us when you return. Would we could annihilate space and appear before you! If there be such creatures as fairies, I wish I was converted into one! How poor and narrow our limitations are, compared to the

desires and wishes of the soul ! In reality we require a new resurrection body to meet the increase of the emancipated spirit. Mrs. Sidney instructs me in these ideas, and says the dawn of new truths will better prepare the soul for wider and more heroic action. I have written you a long letter, because I remember you told me to send at least fifty sheets. The time is nigh for posting, but I am not half done. How much I have yet to tell you ! but the ideas are all getting mixed up, and trembling anxiety is so overmastering me that I am unable to add any more save an earnest cry for your speedy return. Oh, how we are wearying for you ! Come home, dearest father, come home ! With many loving messages from Robert and Mrs. Sidney, and a thousand loving embraces from your own pet, I am ever your affectionate and heart-broken

‘DAISY.’





CHAPTER L.

LIGHT AND LOVE IN THE VALLEY.

INSIDE one of the ambulances of the Franco-Prussian war, Rosa bent tenderly over the wasted form of Monsieur Vance. She was wiping the fever perspiration standing out on his cold forehead, and while soothing his mental unrest, she skilfully nursed his physical infirmities, and listened with rapt attention to his every word. To say Rosa was then sublimely beautiful, would simply reveal the poverty of language. Therefore we must leave the attained grandeur of her individuality as something we can admire and wish to imitate, but which we cannot describe. Even the finest touches of the artist's brush, or the most subtle skill of the sculptor, could but vaguely trace the more manifest grandeur of her spiritual beauty. If allowed the expression, we would say we perceived the special tracing of God's own workmanship in every feature and grace of expression. That is, His Spirit, reverently inhaled, had moulded every virtue and excellence in her great soul to His own mind and will, and the loftiest flight of imagination, as well as the very perfection of art, had to bow in silent admiration.

Time had again woven a portion out of the endless web of eternity, and much of interest we are compelled to leave unnarrated had taken place with many of our characters from the time Rosa shrouded her venerable aunt and Cousin Phil. In all her varying experiences, however, she had never withdrawn her affections from Monsieur, nor yet ceased to cherish a firm belief in his innate goodness. When the French and German war was proclaimed, she was among the first of a few philanthropic ladies who left England to attend to the wounded and dying. Perhaps some lingering hope that she might meet the lost object of her affection tended to stimulate her philanthropic enthusiasm. We know enough of her, however, to convince us no secret sorrow, however severe and deep-seated, would prevent her from doing active service for humanity, or could for a moment tempt her to indulge in sentimental selfishness. Nevertheless, in all the years which had passed, her passionate love for Monsieur was not in the least abated. If it had been possible for love to die of starvation, hers most assuredly would have been dead long ago. From the night Monsieur so mysteriously fled from her aunt's hospitality, not one message or remote

hint of answering reciprocity had reached her from her runaway lover. She knew, however, such a man was in France doing active service for his country, but in regard to herself he might have dropped out of the planet. Henry Hamilton knew she was deeply wounded; and hating Monsieur with all the firm hate of his nature, he never mentioned his name, and knew if ever they met one of them would fall.

By nature, as well as wide experience, Rosa was a true nurse. Her knowledge of the human frame, and enlightened views of the laws of health, together with her wonderful tact and wide, tender sympathy, and subtle insight into the human heart, rendered her a true miracle-worker. By virtue of these divine gifts, she cast out devils of mental disorders, raised the fever-stricken, soothed the chaotic distress of the over-strained brain, and made the drooping and despairing strong to endure. The result was that the humblest and most profane in the ambulance venerated her with deepest and truest devotion. In her presence the atheistical and more barbarous were pure and reverent, feeling religion must possess some divine power, and draw its resources from some perennial fount of uncreated excellence, when it could so purify, empower, and exalt a woman. From the wounded, adoring general down to the rudest private, she was esteemed and beloved, and the dying whispered her name in every prayer, and spoke of her as God's angel conducting them through the dark valley. After the forced marches, weary camp anxiety, and the maddening horror of the battle-field, she was indeed light and love in the valley of the shadow of death.

'As Sir Walter Scott says, when we reflect deeply on life, and especially after we are on the shady side, we begin regarding the whole as a dream within a dream,' Monsieur Vance said. 'However, as the change we call death draws near, we find that instead of going to sleep, or crumbling up in dusty inaction, we are rather about to wake up, it may be for the first time, to a glorious scene of indefinable life. Ah! how poor and trifling appears our best efforts at noble living, when we see the coffin standing ready, and hear the fluttering wings of approaching convoys, as they linger, waiting to bear us away from all dear friends and familiar surroundings! I suppose there never was a man or woman who had in any intelligent way thought out the meaning and aim of life, but who felt at the end (even in the decay and decomposition of their present mortal body) a great over-soul of undeveloped energy panting and struggling for fuller expression and wider scope. In these times, however, when all forms of religious worship, all complications and complexions of beliefs, and the letter, nay, the very spirit of inspiration, are all thrown into a furnace of sceptical criticism, seven times heated with party rage and superstitious fanaticism, I think it may not be out of place for me to give you some idea of what I feel in regard to the soul's relation to God. Now I am done with the vexing controversies of reason and feeling, of tradition and the ever inflowing spirit of truth, nay, done with passion, and with death standing at my right hand, and my soul bent to the will of heaven, I would bear witness to the innate immortality of our mysterious individual life, and say that the truth of righteousness ever finds an echo in the human

conscience. Is it not true that some of our most advanced thinkers have said that the true test of the civilization of a nation must be measured by its progress in science? To that I would only say a conditional amen. Simply because we must remember that, while it is true that science appeals almost exclusively to reason, reason can be, nay, often is, as bigoted, one-sided, and dogmatic as feeling. Therefore, I would say we can simply test a nation's civilization by the truths of its scientific discoveries, and not by mere startling assumptions and monstrous theories; and it appears to me that science has not yet given, any more than revelation, anything like a conclusive or consistent definition even of the origin of the lowest forms of animated organized life. It has certainly, in a most remarkable manner, elucidated the infinitude of the unity and design of all the varying evolutions of the complex whole; and the value of such discoveries cannot be overestimated, because, while manifesting still more clearly the infinite vastness and minuteness of the great Originator, these discoveries also more clearly demonstrate the limitless capabilities of the human mind. Nevertheless, while science has done much, and is ever doing more, to dispel all the human-imposed curses of ignorance, bigotry, and superstition, it can tell us almost nothing of the origin and power of love, has no logical measurement for pity and pathos, and cannot explain one longing, yearning desire; and the unbroken psalm of forty or threescore years of earnest, reverent aspiration after the pervading spirit of Deity, is the spark of God-life which is too subtle for its analysis or terms of definition. It may be, however, that science will some day be more certain in its sound on the beautiful hope of immortality. At present, however, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that many learned men and women consider the hope or desire of immortal life either mere moonshine sentimentality, or an ignorant and overweening idea of the importance of solitary units of life. I do not for a moment attempt to deny that even the universal life of humanity is of small importance to the creating or originating Source or Power of all life. But we must remember that life individually or universally does not, or at least ought not to estimate itself by the creative power or resources of its Originator, but rather by its feelings or conscious life relations to His higher attributes of love, beneficence, mercy, etc.,—and it may be that even God Himself cannot create individual soul excellence,—and to assume the corporating or generalizing of individual worth which has once won His admiration, enlisted His sympathy, and thrilled with the mystic reciprocity of His love, is to introduce discord into the nature and character of an infinitely perfect Being. In fact, it is science committing suicide by introducing limitation and incompleteness into the very system of harmonious evolution, which is ever struggling upward toward limitless perfection. You will therefore see that personal immortality is neither dependent on human reason, nor yet resting on the shifting foundations of human feeling, but rests in the justice and the unique perfectness of Him who has bestowed on us the gift of life. You will further see that I do not even lay too much value on our intuitive aspirations, or consider our longing or desire for continuity of life so much an earnest of our innate immortality as evidence of our

capability to enter on and enjoy such a state of being ; and seeing it is inconsistent with the character of infinite perfection to absorb, blot out, or generalize that which has individual capabilities, and joys and powers of being and doing, our immortality is part and parcel of our mysterious life. To say anything is possible for God, is simply ignorant misconception of power and might. Everything is impossible with a perfect Being which in the least interferes with the constitution of His perfection of righteousness, and God would not be perfect in righteousness if He could or would crush out a hope, wish, or desire which He had inspired, before the entire capability to hope, wish, and attain had been fully exhausted. We hear a great deal of perfected humanity, and I often think the phrase is more sounding than profound. What is perfected humanity? Humanity has many forms of perfection, and each perfect after its kind ; therefore, I think, instead of all the mighty agencies of education and inspiration being struggling and striving to produce the perfect *man* and *woman*, as men and women all are striving and will ever more strive and struggle to represent God in all the infinite fulness of His incomprehensible excellence.

‘Beloved Rosa, I see from your anxious face you would rather I ceased speaking. I can see you are wistful to remind me my duty is to try and rest, so that, if possible, I may regain a little strength. You wish me to mind myself, and leave posterity to war and wrangle on. Bear with me, however, when I say it is in honour of your influence that I long to express some of my inner thoughts and feelings, and in expression I find some solace, and for a time forget my physical pain and weary unrest. Let me hold you very close, that I may convince myself you are actually beside me, a light in the valley. Beloved completer of my meaningless, unshapely life, made shipwreck through pride and prejudice, how shall I praise you ! How can I thank you ! Rosa, I love you as I do God, and you must just accept my homage in all its sinful incompleteness. Rosa, I am just beginning to understand love ; just beginning to live life. Glorious life ! wondrous, mysterious life ! who will yet be born from the womb of futurity to invent, construct, paint, write, and sing its vastness, beauty, pathos, and harmony ?’

‘Darling Vance, I am indeed eager for your recovery,’ she replied ; ‘but if speaking be a solace, and expression a means whereby you are raised for the time above the agony of your physical distress, then speak on by all means, and be assured I am experiencing a rare, indefinable pleasure in listening to such beautiful thought and feeling. In regard to individual immortality, you have briefly and beautifully expressed the very ideas which have for long struggled in my inner consciousness. I have ever felt my immortality was interwoven in the very constitution of divine perfection ; and that no wish, noble desire, or pulse of life will be shorn of its personal existence so long as it is capable of longing and aspiring. It may be, however, that we can be spiritual as well as physical suicides,—that is, there may be human beings so wearied and debased, or so sluggish and void of all energy and enterprise, and so destitute of love and appreciation of intelligent beauty, as to desire to cease to be, and these may sink into their primitive dust and become mere inert matter. Of course, if I go on, you will say, like dear departed

aunt, that I am never satisfied save in questioning and putting forth negation. Nevertheless, while I am one with you in your ideas of individual immortality, and believe you have expressed the very doctrine Christ lived and taught, I feel all religion and philosophy cannot enable us to part with our dear ones without strong tears and cries. I feel you are nearing the dawn of never-ending day, know you are soon to sing of victory and joy, yet I am in deepest distress, and feel as if the very sun of my life was to go down in darkness. Darling, were there no individual immortality beyond the strand of time, no continuity of undeveloped resources then, to die as you are doing, with vast, limitless ideas just beginning to shoot up, and great, godlike aspirations seeking after the infinite and beautiful, and with an over-soul all panting and quivering with love and sympathy, would, indeed, be dying man transcending nature, and death defeating Deity. Philosophize as we may, it is hard to be cut down with our schemes simply drawn out, with our brain throbbing with maturing, undeveloped thought, and our bosom still yearning for deeper draughts of love. In your case it must be intensely agonizing, yet you never murmur. Vance, you must feel it hard to die in mid-time of your days, to feel you have been shot down like a wild beast, and left to ebb out your life with your great soul teeming with philanthropic schemes for the social and religious emancipation of your country, and especially with your dear Daisy's weeping love holding you with its golden anchorage to earth !'

Monsieur gasped, 'Yes, dearest, it is hard ; but God is giving me the victory, and your presence and sympathy are banishing all save gratitude and adoring wonder. Only you must be strong and not give way. Hitherto you have been so heroic that you never even mentioned those ties of love so peculiarly dear and overmastering. Therefore, in tenderest pity for my great weakness, forget, or at least be silent in regard to, our unfortunate love, and those other sacred ties of nature, and point me away to the joy and glory of the higher life upon which I am so soon to enter. We are such a strange compound of dust and deity that little would draw my soul away from the rapt vision of diviner life which is opening like a vast ocean of resplendent glory.'

'Only once more, darling, will I utter a complaint,' she replied, sobbing on his bosom. 'Now that pent-up feeling has given way, I cannot help saying I can hardly say in your case God's will be done. It seems too cruel of fate or fortune thus to end your noble life, more noble in some of its failings than most men's triumphs. It is not the will of God that your earthly life be thus cruelly cut out by unscrupulous, barbarous rulers. However, I will cease my complaint, and endeavour to be strong and heroic. Nevertheless, I am intensely loth to part with you. To me you are a king among men, and I feel honoured by thus prostrating my whole soul before you. Vance, love such as ours seems the very sanctifying of the soul, the very mystery of sinless life raising us nearer and nearer to God.'

Monsieur put his one arm, now all he had, around her, and his feeble frame shook with the overpowering strength of his affection, and Rosa feared lest the ebbing life she so loved would vanish like a breath, consumed by its own intensity. Claspings him tenderly, and

supporting him with rich cordials, she said, 'Forgive me, dearest, for being so selfish as seek to detain you, or add to your suffering by adverting to vanished joys. I know that above everything you are eager for the redemption of your country, that you are more than willing to give your life a ransom, if by so doing you could either purchase, or in a degree aid, its social and spiritual emancipation. However, be assured that all true effort has a corresponding reward in some degree and form, and your dying prayer, and the noble sacrifice of your life, will bring many blessings to your country. The earnest, heroic prayer of a dying martyr is the sweetest and most sacred incense which speeds to heaven through the immaterial tubes of spiritual reciprocity. I believe such a prayer thrills the very inner life of God's love with pleased emotions to find on earth a son or daughter in active sympathy with His redeeming mercy. I consider the future greatness and glory of France (which not a few of her sons of genius have foretold) will entirely depend on her willingness to support and work in harmony with a democratic government, and in its belief in the authority of the human soul, instead of fanatical zeal for the gross superstition and man-millinery of Romanism. With a liberal government, free religion, purer literature, free trade, and more enterprising farming, you will indeed be a prosperous and beautiful nation. In science and art you have also great room for improvement, for while your front streets and gardens are scenes of rare enchantments, your back yards and courts are impure, your houses badly ventilated and insufficiently supplied with water, and your picture galleries are gory with tragic scenes of blood. However, all this will pass and perish the moment you have done with dynastic oppression, and the generality of your people are aspiring after something diviner than mere military brag and bluster, silly bravado, and the tinsel renown of war. When the generality of French men and women aspire to give mercy instead of judgment, and understand that under all circumstances war is the most insane of all insanities, making fools apes, knaves cowardly, wholesale murderers, simply enriching the chest of imperial robbery,—that it crowns law with the insignia of unmitigated villany, and converts parliaments and governments into mere dice boxes, where the highest number has an innings, even if the policy be mere unprincipled adventure and party selfishness,—I say, when the majority of French men and women begin seeing through the outside tinsel of Church and State jugglery, France will have made a move in the right direction.'

'Rosa, your words are ever like goads in a sure place,' Monsieur replied, drawing her still nearer, and pressing his dry, parched lips to hers, dewy and sweet as a spring morning. 'It is indeed true enjoyment listening to your clear insight, keen, cutting satire, and spiritual wisdom. How clearly you see beneath all shams, and perceive the redemption of righteousness underlying all false experimenting and superstitious theories! I specially like your idea of the virtue of a dying martyr's prayer. Patriotism is indeed a noble and beautiful instinct or virtue. But, alas! like sectarianism, or many other isms, it is too often mere fanatical ignorance and bigotry going forth in the name of conscience and honour to commit deeds which make angels weep and devils blush with shame, viewing humanity weltering in the sickening

horror of fratricide. Man is indeed a strange compound of good and evil ; and when evil is the ruling passion, he is often a very fiend incarnate. Within me patriotism is a strong passion or principle. I do not think it is possible for any one to love their country more religiously than I do ; therefore, if my dying prayer be all for France, may God help me to liberalize that prayer, and, like the Divine Founder of our beautiful human religion, enable me to pray even for our enemies. Dearest angel of love, I know it must pain you to hear me speak of the Germans as cruel, greedy, and grasping. I know you have warm sympathies with the German colleges of metaphysical lore, that its mystic shades of speculative research are peculiarly congenial to your subtle intellect. However, the slain warrior, as well as the true author or artist, must speak and paint as they find and experience, and refuse to pander to any established opinion or conventional form, however popular. Of course, the autocratic government of Germany you consider a rank, overspreading evil. Nevertheless, you love the thought and poetry of its poets and philosophers. When weary with the tear and wear of your daily endeavour to raise humanity nearer heaven, you withdraw to revel in its shades of pedantic learning, and almost lose your own rich naturalness among the mazes of its semi-philosophic vagueism, forgetting that much of its mysticism is but a mind without a soul, a religion without filial love, and that its poetry is damp and chilly like dead men's bones, and its reverence and adoration but the foaming effervescence of asceticism. However, in many ways it has attractions for the studious and speculative, and is perhaps foremost in freedom of religious thought ; and may God forbid that I exalt my own country at the expense of another, or deny my neighbour's virtue in order to gloss over our frivolity and vanity ! Nevertheless, I say, woe, woe to our invaders if they exalt themselves above measure, or extend the sacrifice of innocent lives one hour longer than bare necessity. If they fail to be beneficent in triumph, and exact the last farthing, as surely will the same measure be meted out to them by witnessing heaven. It is the divine law running through the universal plan, viz. that he or she who would save their life must lose it in sacrifice for the cause of goodness. Nations, as well as individuals, are but beginning to spell out the first letters of the science of righteous living ; and although in many ways this is a great age, nevertheless, coming generations will weep and laugh in turn at our silly blundering, our conceited boasting, national jealousies, sectarian hates, book and creed religion, and chimerical millennium. In the future, the clearer dawn of divine truth will draw all mankind more and more into peaceful harmony, and the ever-advancing discoveries of science will enable the mind to realize that the body is the mere garment whereby the soul is seen. While the future will esteem and conserve all our goodness, it will condemn and shun all our political blundering and mad adventure, silly shamism, and gold idolatry and cowardly hypocrisy. In a word, I believe the future will, to a great extent, embody your highest ideal, and give colour and reality to your prophetic visions. Unborn poets and historians will indite nobler songs of adoration, and generously extract our wheat from the chaff ; and more advanced philanthropy will raise towering monuments

to the noble army of our present reformers who are standing by the truth of all science, and refusing to prostrate the conscience save to the highest good, and who, in midst of bigotry and superstition of the most subtle and dangerous kind, are pioneering the fuller revelation of charity, love, and righteousness which will one day cradle the world in peace, making the family in earth and heaven one.'

A faint spasm made Monsieur pause in his prophetic oration. Not wishing, however, to terrify Rosa, he strove to make light of his great physical exhaustion. Nevertheless, he knew he was hovering on the margin of eternity, and he was intensely anxious to hold her very near to him, and he still more tenderly entwined her with his one arm; and while she gently wiped the cold dew from his forehead, he whispered, 'I have run myself ashore, and have lost the command of speech in the radiant effulgence of the divine vision. Now, beloved, I will listen to the music of your soft voice while you arrange my incoherent rambling.'

Some intuitive monitor warned Rosa that soon, very soon, her lover would have flown away—that even while he spoke he seemed within the veil of the spiritual, and fast receding from her tenacious embrace. When he ceased speaking she kissed his pallid lips, and sadly fondled his jetty hair, now thickly silverized and shining like the fleecy clouds of the morning.

'Our love is so enrapturing, and my adoration for you so inspiring,' she said, 'that I forget everything save an absorbing desire to hold you back from the mysterious something which is coming with muffled feet to steal you away. Darling Vance, we are indeed wonderful creatures. How the soul of mankind struggles on with its fearful destiny! Often, often defeated, but never utterly vanquished, even amid the blackened ruin of a battle-field it raises up its broken body, and with a mind still majestic and immortal rears new heavens out of every sweeping privation.

'Dearest, I have so often stood by the dying, I am strangely familiar with the varying complexions and modes of approach of what we call death, and you cannot by any well-meant disguise hide from me the sad truth that you are weighing anchor, and that soon, very soon, you will coast no more in this narrow mooring. However, I have the consolation that your spirit will ever entwine mine in tenderest sympathy. Nevertheless, I am so foolishly fond of this dear wounded body, so spell-bound by every feature of your face and tone of your voice, that I am unwilling to endure a short separation. Forgive me, Vance, for I fear my love is selfish; I suppose all love of this kind is. It must be I am selfish, else why do I plan and strive to keep you lingering on in a crippled, diseased body? This very touch of selfishness, so pardonable because of its devotion, tells me plainly I have not attained to the ideal I am striving after. Ah! how difficult it is arriving at true Christian perfection, to that state of holy sacrifice where not a thought of self is present. Instead of lending you wings, and cutting your chains, I am a heavy burden, detaining you in a loathsome prison-house. Now, however, when I have again kissed you, I will be more ready to hand you over to waiting convoys. Soon it will be day eternal

with you ; soon your orphanage will be for ever past, and you will be seated in your Father's house beside all you have loved and lost ; soon you will embrace noble, cross-bearing Jesus. Methinks His is the most smiling face in Planet X. Still the humble lamb, I often think I see Him in the shady groves of more cloudless sunshine, gracefully conversing on the water of life ever springing up from its infinite source.'

'Rosa dearest, these are grand, sweet thoughts,' Monsieur faltered. 'Speak on, for your voice is sublimest music in my ear. Strange, however, I seem suddenly in the dark, in a wide empty vault. I feel, Rosa, I have lost my way ; yet my life, *i.e.* my conscious *me*, is ebbing away, drifting I know not whither. It may be I am dissolving into the liquid elements, and I shrink from annihilation. I do not fear eternal punishment, nor yet the meeting face to face with infinite righteousness, but the mystic love of life is so great that I would rather live for ever in hell than exhale this mystery of conscious feeling. In everlasting fires the memory of your sacrifice and love would heal all pain, and plant heaven in the cave of eternal despair. If I die, will I live again? Hold me tight, Rosa, in your great, full life, until the visible outlines of the spiritual body be more familiarized with its enlarged scope.'

'You cannot see death, darling,' she whispered. 'These fears are but the shrinking timidity of failing physicalism. It is but the mystic solitariness of the soul as it prepares to withdraw from its diseased shell, and say adieu to all familiar scenes. Perhaps it is better that a sort of bewildering mistiness should envelop the departing spirit, so that it may be in part unconscious of the agonizing love of those left behind.'

Monsieur lay like one in a trance, with his great black eyes gazing on the lovely face of the woman he loved, and with a fuller vision of more perfect life opening before him ; and joy, deep, full, pure, and blessed, made him swim in an ecstasy of transport ; thoughts and feelings, too holy and passionate for human language, welled up in his faint heart, and he could only look the gratitude and love which was melting his very soul like a mass of liquid joyfulness. Ah, how happy, how tender and beneficent he felt ! how the pathos of his silent prayer for the complete redemption of humanity sped to heaven ! and hovering spirits, sharing in his ecstatic aspiration, blessed the divine mystery of human love and heroic effort. After sleeping an hour, he said, 'Dear, sweet Rosa, the darkness is for ever fled. This experience is strange beyond expression, but you will know when you too come to the margin, and hear the splashing of the oars and the inflowing of the last tide. All the pain and weary unrest are for ever gone, and my rest has come. Now the trumpet of war is for ever hushed, and I have seen the glory and realness of the spirit world. The astronomer is right. It is a real planet, sweeping in the courses of solar law, but its life-conditions and social order are grand beyond description. Therefore, darling, work on with renewed earnestness ; for I can tell you there are no drones, no selfish indulgence, in the wide immensity of Planet X. Now I must comfort you, for the inspiration of the Almighty has given me the victory. I have got much to explain to you, and at the outset frankly admit I have been a weak coward, putting

off confession until the very last, and the withholding of these confessions has added to your secret sorrow and uncertainty. To you, noble, generous Rosa, I have been cruelly unjust ; but one false step not speedily repented of leads into a complexity of evil results which, on calm reflection, seems so damning that a man of my peculiar sensitiveness would rather continue hiding, preferring to be misjudged and misunderstood, than brave the censure and contempt of public opinion. Public opinion has been the miserable god I too long bent before ; nevertheless, while its opinions shaped my outward conduct and made me a mean liar, I always more or less hated and despised its silly conventionalism, and absurd caste prejudice, and false maxims of morality. To commit sin is certainly a great mistake, but to hide the sin and hedge it about with lies is death and rottenness to the spirit. Evil all through is a blind, hateful thing, and the hiding of evil a gross mistake ; for time and eternity are one, and at some period, however remote, we must bleed out all our hidden, cancerous wounds before we can grow up into the beauty and strength of a higher life. These hints will enable you to see I have only been noble in desire and word, but that the flesh has been too often weak and willing to fall in the day of trial. However, when I am gone, only remember me in my attempts after sincerity of life, and forget all my cowardly weakness.'

'I only know you are good and generous,' she replied. 'Darling Vance, love such as mine can only find pleasure in recording the perennial virtues which survive all decay. How devoutly I thank heaven that we have met and renewed our love even for one short hour ! You always blame yourself, and magnify all your errors. I often wonder if you are aware of the huge lumps of divine thought and noble feeling which have struggled for years in your mind for expression. The limitations of circumstances, however, the poverty of language, and the weakness of all emphasis, and the measured rules of logic, are but poor, meagre mediums for a soul all on fire of divine love, and thrilling and throbbing with the passionate enthusiasm of a divine mission. Whatever your failings to some, you have ever lived as one aware of the solemn fact that every man and woman has a special work to do which no other could accomplish. And if this important fact only dawned on all youths and maidens before the vices and follies of the age had drifted them into mistaken directions, we might hope to see an end of drunkenness and all gambling and betting excesses.'

'Dearest, you flatter me,' Monsieur said in low, animated tones. 'The leading characteristic of your nature is an almost absolute belief in the innate righteousness of the human soul. You are so credulous and pure you can hardly conceive of a man or woman absolutely mean, cruel, and unclean ; and from first to last you have overrated me, ever throwing around me a mantle of ideal greatness and grandeur drawn from your own surpassing beneficence. However, I will confess your high opinion did more for me than all orthodox calls to repentance and threats of everlasting punishment. It was your wonderful human love, and beautiful simple faith in a God-Father, which led me into the narrow path of eternal life. Nevertheless, in these advanced times,

when the wonderful achievements of steam and electricity, and other scientific discoveries, are almost enabling the children of this generation to annihilate distance, defy pain, and banish the darkness of night, we are apt (in the flush of mere intellectual victory) to forget that the highest science of all is knowledge of, and respect for, the divine laws of righteousness within the very core of the constitution of nature. Simply because orthodox superstitions, religious faiths, even to this late year of grace, hold popular sway over the less enlightened majority, the positivist and pessimist, and even some optimists, fancy that religious and moral truth is not advancing in proportion to the advance of material science. These, however, are merely carried away by the deluding force of popular forms and traditional superstition, and are evidently unable to realize or believe in the spiritual and moral advancement of the mighty host, vulgarly termed heretics, who have attained to freedom of conscience, and whose reverence and holy wonder in poetry and prophecy ever pioneer, in mystic sign and symbol, the most advanced discoveries of material science. Because we cannot see the ever-aspiring evolutions of reverence, love, and righteousness as we can mark off and trace out the struggles and onward life of animals and plants, we forget that there was a time when the people only realized God as the inspirer and teacher of a few Hebrew bards and prophets, and could only draw near to Him through the blood of bulls and sheep, and the ablution of priests; and a later time, when the enlarging human mind, and the spread of knowledge, began realizing some divine inspiration in the wise sayings of Confucius, Buddha, Mahomet, Plato, and Socrates, as well as in Jesus Christ; and, in these more modern times, while the majority only find God in a book, a creed, or particular church, all over the continents of Europe and America there are thousands of men and women who feel they are inspired by the Spirit of God. Nevertheless, our scientific students either forget or ignore these facts, and in a most absurd manner fancy the intellect has made a march on the soul of righteousness and spiritual aspiration. It is, however, otherwise. The spiritual life of the soul is ever moving in advance of all material discovery and achievements, and not in one Christ, but in every human soul can the image of God be incarnated; and while material science prostrates the intellect before its ever-conquering achievements, the diviner and mightier science of religion, of love to God and man, of justice and righteousness, of wonder and adoration, will tame, sanctify, and perfect the monstrous war cruelty, the vivisection torture, and the mammon idolatry of material science, and consecrate and prostrate the intellect before the diviner altar of conscience and righteousness. Instead, therefore, of assuming that the advance of material science is the true test of civilization, we might be nearer truth if we say that, to a great extent, the marvellous discoveries of material science are the results or offspring of civilization. In vision, in song, in parable, in prophecy, and in prayer, the religious soul has in some form pioneered the era of reason and mental enlightenment; and, like mystic stars in the social horizon, love for God and man, mercy and charity, justice, holiness, righteousness, and sympathetic tenderness, as well as rapt veneration and awful wonder, will continue the mystic influences which

will hold the marvellous powers and achievements of material science, like the channels of the mighty deep, in a healing, fertilizing course, blessing all nations, and revealing all the immensities of worlds as the inheritance and home of a common brotherhood. Knowing and believing that religion has yet to sanctify material science, I willingly die for the sins and errors of my beloved country. Nevertheless, I grant it is hard leaving a heart-broken orphan, and all the enrapturing endearment of our mutual love. Rosa, for Daisy's sake, think kindly of France, and aid her deliverance in the coming struggle of political and religious liberty.'

'All my life, Vance dearest, I will labour for France and all countries, to deliver them from all evil,' she faltered. 'You have ever been on the side of humanity, of right and mercy, and heaven will hear and respect your dying prayer. Love, life, beauty, and healthful harmony pervade all nature, and as we realize the divine fact, and strive to live it out and reproduce it in society, so far are we one with God. This war, like all war, is as unjust as uncalled for. Nevertheless, if the lives of the ten thousands slain, and the infinite agony of orphans' and widows' tears, suffice to redeem the dead past of blind bigotry in monarchical oppression and priestcraft superstition, vain frivolity and profane scepticism, after ages will acknowledge it a divine sacrifice, for which they will offer sublime adoration.'





CHAPTER LI.

THE DEAD PAST.

ANOTHER week had passed, and still Monsieur lingered on, no better, and, as a matter of course, was much weaker. The doctors were astonished at his vitality, forgetting that the soul lives on love, and lingers in a diseased body, feasting on the transport of mutual endearment. Had Rosa not been beside him, Monsieur's body would have been mixing with his kindred dust. Now he was so weak that she never left him, night nor day, and her want of sleep was as much a cause of comment as his power in resisting death. Sometimes he was so superior to all save intense pleasure, that he fancied he was done with time, and in a state of beatific rest. Their flow of conversational communion was indeed wonderful, and her sweet voice hushed all his mental and physical weariness, and often made him sink for hours into a state of enchanting sleep. When he awoke, it was from a beautiful dream to a still more beautiful reality—to feast his eyes on her matchless beauty, and watch the sad, sweet smile of pious resignation playing round her small mouth, and see her lovely eyes swim in tears of tenderest sympathy.

‘Adored Rosa, I fear you make me far too happy,’ Monsieur said. ‘With such love and devotion as my constant companion, I seem to defy death. To fall asleep, or excursion away, with you holding my hand and speaking sweet, endearing words, will indeed be a pleasure and experience as enchanting as mystical. Now, however, before the curtain falls on all earthly concerns, I must once again advert to the dead past. In justice to the living, and in order also that you may finish my work, by being both mother and father to the sorrowing children I leave unprotected, it is necessary for me to explain or reveal many painful details of a dead past, the sins of which have rolled between us, making separation worse than death, and has embittered many years of your life with a living, secret sorrow. Your presence here, and devoted love, tell me I am forgiven, nay, still loved; but that very forgiveness adds infinitely to my remorse and shame. I feel my physical life is fast ebbing away, and I must be very brief, leaving you to fill in the sad picture from imagination. Rosa, my shame is still blushing and sensitive, and it wrings drops of blood from

my faint heart to have to shock your pure sensibilities. However, I will not spare myself, if the confession can in any way atone for the past, and enable my dear children to find a wise, devoted mother. Rosa, do not hate me, nor yet turn away from me in loathing, when I confess that Polly Smith and Agatha St. Clare, the mother of my beloved Daisy, are one. Ah! I do not wonder at the expression of sad astonishment that is stealing over your countenance. I can fancy all your faith and trust in humanity are now melting like a snowball, when I, the ideal of your pure, beautiful love, confess to being the vile victimizer of her you found dying of starvation and neglect, with her great, gushing genius frozen into defiant scorn, and her pure, child-like trust in God and goodness converted into soured, cynical atheism. Would to heaven such a confession was a mere tragic dream! But, alas! it is true and real as your presence here. We often hear it said that men are half dust, half deity, but I think I have for the most part of my life been but dust animated or demon-possessed. However, I will not establish a belief in a supernatural power of evil, but must rather candidly confess that I too willingly allowed the evil monitor or inclination to have full sway. Had I been intensely earnest for right and good, I could have overcome the most subtle temptation, which, alas! found me a willing, weak slave. It is a dismal fact that I willingly allowed pride, prejudice, the love of position, and the opinion of popular feeling to make me a deliberate, cowardly liar, a mean, sneaking wretch, wandering to and fro with the brand of an outraged conscience for ever burning into my inner soul. Not content with my cupful of lonely misery, I committed a second great sin in hiding all from you, and yet selfishly daring to win your love. Yet all has not been dust and ashes. Your noble love, with its sublime suffering and sacrifice, has been my redemption, and the knowledge you made Agatha's last days bright with the sunshine of social love has been like oil to my dry remorse. Had she died without feeling one touch of kindness—alone, forsaken, and shrouded in defiant scorn, and pinched and torn with the cancerous agony of complete starvation, I would have gone mad and ended my days a babbling idiot. It is too painful; I dare not dwell on the woful picture. Now, however, you can understand why I stole away like a thief and a robber. The truth is, darling, when I came on the locket in your bedroom, with Agatha and Daisy, and discovered you had met and befriended my betrayed victim, I fled like a murderer with only one desire to hide my unholy head. There is, however, no hiding once innocence is fled. The darkest solitude but the more clearly reveals the black outlines of guilt, and seems to press the weary spirit into the very sanctum of heaven's consuming holiness. The moment I got into the heart of the town, I at once disguised myself, and as a sort of monk, or man of God, I found my way to the bedside of Agatha. On some specious pretence I sent the woman who found me the key away on a fool errand, for which I paid well, so that I might agonize alone beside the mother of Daisy. If suffering can in any way atone for sin, what I then endured must, in some degree, have sanctified my soul and satisfied divine justice. I knew the heavy bereavement which had so suddenly overtaken you and

your aunt would prevent you from again visiting the death chamber of poor Polly, and even from dwelling too much on my disappearance. Even had you met me, the disguise was so complete you would never have known me, and grief made me lean and poor in a few hours, and all the ring left my voice.'

Monsieur paused, overcome of physical weakness and the overwhelming anguish of painful memories; and Rosa was so stunned that, for a time, she could neither express sympathy nor astonishment. To outward appearance, however, she was calm and unmoved, hearing all as a matter of course, as a something long expected, the pain and passion of which were long ago spent in secret anguish. Notwithstanding her calm exterior, her whole inner being was quivering with acutest pain, and her pure, holy life seemed ebbing away into a dark abysmal gulf. Monsieur had been her king-man and hero, yet do as she might, she could not entirely stem the pain of regret and disappointment which beat at the foundation of her heaven of love and admiration. She knew such a feeling was contrary to the pure Christianity she lived and believed in, and with an effort she rose superior to wounded pride, and forgot all the injury and ugliness of evil, and only thought of the repentant sinner. Forcing back all rising emotion in feeling, she again embraced Monsieur as one who had long been purged from all evil. When her love and mercy returned, she realized her very pride and indignation was a degree of the sin she condemned, a real manifestation of human weakness. Monsieur was confessing a sin he had long repented of,—a sin for which he had suffered years of fiery torment,—and her duty was clearly to soothe and sympathize, not to judge or criticize.

'Speak one word, Rosa darling, so that I may feel you do not entirely abhor me,' he stammered. 'Speak, and assure me that you will to the very last remain my truest and best friend. Your silence and the strange expression of your bonny face tell me conflicting emotions are surging in your inner being—tell me plainly that your faith and love are cruelly wounded, and your noble belief in the universal redemption of mankind almost rooted up. Still, however, believe life is worth living, and that for every broken law it is just that the human soul suffer until it has purged away its sin!'

'Vance, I confess I was deeply pained and troubled as I strove to believe it was actually you who was making confession of such cruel, deliberate iniquity!' she replied in low, sad tones; 'and I must also admit that I was shocked at my own weakness in allowing wounded pride a short victory. These spasms, however, are now for ever past, and I love you with unchanging, unchanged devotion. Now no further confession can in any way alter the under-current of my undying love or lessen my admiration. As heretofore, you are my hero and prince among men.'

Rosa went on with generous sympathy, throwing the blame on Monsieur's proud relations and his social surroundings, and he said, 'A thousand thanks, beloved, for these dear, reassuring words. Truly I have suffered long and severely for the sins of my youth! Happy, indeed, are those young men whose parents counsel them to buy

wisdom and virtue, and refuse to sell these for any mere delusion ; for these young men and maidens never see the loathsome corruption of vice, nor yet realize the pain and torment of remorse. I have suffered long, but not too long nor yet too acutely. You too generously throw all the blame on false advisers, and the yielding weakness of caste pride and prejudice. The man, however, who can barter conscience and play the coward and liar for fear of these shams and mythical phantoms, is a miserable, unmanly wretch, a mere beggar with a tattered rag of a soul, covered over, it may be, with purple and fine linen. However, I must, while I can, resume my narrative. I told you that, in the disguise of a monk, bent with age and weary in spirit, I wended my way to Drury Lane, and, as I expected, found that despised, neglected Polly Smith was one and the same with Agatha St. Clare, the proud ideal of my youthful passion. Never while the cycles of eternity roll on can I forget the awful anguish of that hour. Sometimes I have thought such anguish and regret an earnest of innate divinity, and that although I had sinned I had not altogether defaced the image of God, and that no familiarity with sin could ever make me love it. Rosa, no language can ever express the infinite torture which then melted my entire being when in one hour you, the celestial ray of heavenly light who had cradled my soul in peace and joy, the divine redeemer who had led me from the benighted error of Roman superstition into the full clear light of communion with the Spirit of all truth, who had blessed me with love of heart and sympathy of soul and reciprocity of mind, whose twin affinities made me swim in an ocean of transporting bliss, were all lost, and at a moment when my miserable soul was heaving up and down in a fearful sea of desperate despair. In finding Agatha, my lost, injured love, I only found a cold corpse, mocking in grim silence at my frantic cries and burning tears. Had I found her alive, even in poverty and disease, I could have surrounded her with comfort, and if I could have heard her voice speak my name with a woman's forgiveness, her pardoning kiss would have recreated within me the peace and joy of heaven. But, ah me ! she was dead, and had died of semi-starvation and a broken heart, and was lying in solemn grandeur in her narrow room ; and the awful judgment of her solemn, silent condemnation was more than I could bear. O God ! was ever man more utterly miserable, more hopelessly shut in with a secret, crushing sorrow ? Even now, after the peace and pardon of heaven have given me years of peaceful sunshine, I shut my eyes on the horrid sight, and feel I must see Agatha in glory, and behold her countenance mantled with perfect joy, before all the sting of remorse is taken away. I remembered of you once telling me the astronomer had a brother in America from whom he had not heard for many a year. When I called at his house, with a view to atone for my sins with deeds of charity, on finding he had just expired, and seeing the distress and anguish of the poor boy, I at once hit on the lucky idea of calling myself his uncle from America. Of course, when he wished to go to you, I had to say I had seen and arranged with you, and that you had been called away on family matters. He accepted my story with a sort of passive indifference, but I confess I did not think he believed it. Before we left, he again desired to be allowed to

call and see if you had returned, and when I positively refused, I shall never forget his look of blank despair. At that time I thought it a sort of atonement to adopt the lad and save you the expense of his education and keep. Now I am convinced I did not do that which after consideration commended. In leaving him behind I dreaded lest you might scent out the truth, and loathe my very memory. Thus a sort of double motive made me adopt the young astronomer. However, when I neared home and had to throw aside my disguise, I told him another specious story; and although he had a sort of horror of me at first, his love for Daisy and my many acts of kindness made him grow to forgive my deception. However, I know he has never been perfectly happy. Often in secret I have seen him weep and sigh; and once he took ill, and the trouble took his brain, he did nothing but call for you and his departed father, and in the hush of evening and in the mystic beauty of morning I have heard him pray for his dear lost sister.'

'Thank heaven, my boy lives!' Rosa exclaimed, unable any longer to keep silent. 'Oh, how I have mourned and yearned for that noble boy! Vance, where is Robert Anton in these times of war and danger? Tell me quick, dearest, where you have left him, for I must lose no time in seeing him. Tell me, for I must hasten to kiss his orphan lips, and reward his faithful devotion, and in a measure fulfil my vow to his sainted father. Not until I have held him to my throbbing bosom, and hear his deep-toned, pensive voice saying he lives and is happy, can I look contentedly toward Planet X, and invoke the hovering spirit of his sire to bless me.'

'By and by, Rosa, you will see him,' Monsieur said, almost choking with emotion. Then he realized he had indeed added to his sins in depriving Rosa of all knowledge of the young astronomer. 'You must remember, darling, that we are in a war ambulance, out in a country overrun by a cruel invader, and that all free passage for the time being is blocked up. Therefore you must be patient, and rest assured I have left him and Daisy in safe keeping. Robert is indeed worthy of all your love, and is every inch a noble youth. Somehow all sinless, pure students, such as he, are by virtue of their very knowledge, it may be, pensive and grave. At present he has more than a mere youth's part to play. Daisy is impulsive and wayward, and both of them are caged birds in the besieged city. From Daisy's dying mother you learned the child's early history of sorrow, therefore I do not require to enter into that portion of the sad results of my unmanliness. When you meet Daisy, I am sure you will soon learn to love her. One glance will convince you she is a fair, tender flower of rare beauty and fragrance. When I am gone, you must read and cherish her letter. Carry it back to her, dyed with her father's dying blood. Tell her it is the only one which ever reached me, and believing I was dying on the battle-field, I determined to expire clasping it to my heart. As soon as you have seen me laid in the warrior's trench, lose no time in endeavouring to find a passport into the besieged city; for a calm, heroic soul such as yours will be of immense service to the bewildered masses of men and women shut in with social anarchy and all the horror of famine. Your first duty will be to clasp these weeping orphans to your great heart of

boundless love ; and while they live and need your aid and sympathy, do not consider your work done, nor yet pine for the more congenial surrounding and fuller life of Planet X. Often, often I longed to write and tell you all, but the demon of pride kept me silent. However, when I had special warning that I would very probably be cut down in mid-time of my days, I yearned for your love and forgiveness, and to hand over my children to your care and keeping. However, if my demon pride kept me silent and sullen, your love came on angel's wings to my side. Such goodness is more than I deserve. Oh the depths of woman's love ! The divinity of her charity and goodness is vast and beautiful as the ever-receding sublimity which encircles the myriad worlds floating or rather sweeping in majestic order like dazzling globes of mystic wonder. Rosa dear, I am now so supremely contented that I can hardly tell if I have ever realized misery. Now my beloved Daisy will have a good, tender mother, and a sweet, sweet home, and Robert will not mourn for me, seeing my death has restored to him the ideal goddess of his youthful love. Now I am so happy that I seem a bubbling fountain of ever-increasing blessedness. Truly, goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.'

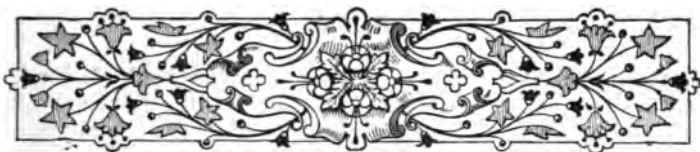
Rosa said 'amen,' and tenderly kissed the rapt face of Monsieur, every feature of which shone as if the glory of heaven had already transfigured both soul and body.

'Now, darling, try and sleep,' she said, 'for you are completely worn out with speaking, and the excitement of sad, sacred memories has rent the spirit. Now I will sing you asleep with a low solo ; and when you awake, we will resume our talk on the dear children.'

'Bear with me yet a moment,' he replied ; 'only a very little more requires to be explained, and then I will rest in your love free of all anxiety. As soon as you can get away, I would like you to leave France. Of course you will naturally return to your native land, at least until this country is more settled. I have the most of my fortune in British bonds and other profitable investments, and there is sufficient for all of you. However, I have willed over a liberal independency in your own right, and made you and Mr. Hamilton sole trustees over the children's estate. You must make the best apology you can to Cousin Henry for my base conduct. All my papers are in — & Co.'s solicitors, London ; and I may here say I have left the dear children very wealthy, and I know you will guide them to use their wealth for the up-raising and educating of the poor. Once you are fairly settled in Britain I would like you to erect a more fitting monument to Agatha and the sage astronomer. Daisy's mother lies on the left side of the seer, close beside the willow. Also plant a red-and-white rose beside the massive pillar ; and every summer I will think of the sacrament of flowers, and descend to watch you watering these delicate exhalations, and will interest myself in all your labour as you train the wondering youth and maiden in all the ever-progressing excellence of a noble man and womanhood. Rosa, child of romance, come near to me ; daughter of charity and love, come very close, for I am afraid lest you elude my grasp. To suffering Agatha and her vile seducer you have been

the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Rosa, come close ; I am feeling cold, awfully cold and strange. The exterior chill, however, seems fanning the inner heart of the immortal spirit which, like a live coal, is cleaving the clammy, stiffening body with its warm perennial breath which no death-chill can freeze. Rosa, I like whispering your name, it sounds so sweet and smells so fragrant. Rosa, queen of flowers and queen of women, our souls are fused into one, and, as I review all your excellence, I feel you are so great and good, that all monuments erected to your memory and in honour of your goodness were a sort of mockery. When your spirit has excursed to Planet X, stone and marble dare not hamper or profane your grave. Before your graces, painting and sculpture will bow in silent admiration. In the hearts of the people your memory will be engraven ; and flowers, planted by weeping gratitude and watered and ripened into bloom by sunshine and shower, will mark your resting-place. Birds, too, will love to sing, and joyfully hatch their young in the waving grass growing out of your bosom ; and as they gaily sing and revel in the love of their free life, they will feel the ascending aroma of your dust like the holy incense of protecting deity.'





CHAPTER LII.

HEART-CRIES BETWEEN TWO ETERNITIES.

ROSA sobbed as if her heart had become a volcano of heaving suffering. Monsieur's revelations, together with his poetic adoration, had touched and aroused every emotion of her intense nature, and for a time her aching heart seemed in a winepress of lonely suffering. The one bosom on which she so ardently longed to lean was fast receding away, and her bereaved heart (shut in with a past and future eternity) cried out in its lonely despair for some invisible source of strength.

'Vance dearest, it cannot be that I am to be again alone,' she said in low, heart-touching tones, and her wistful eyes appeared as if they were cleaving all seen and material things, and entwining some indefinable power, and drawing from it all the meaning and mystery of life. 'It may be weak, but I cannot let you die and become like water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. Beloved, I will abide close by you, and we may yet, for a time at least, defy the arch enemy. This cruel phantom death has drawn me into many experiences of severe discipline, and holds much of mine hidden away in its dark chamber; and I will hate it, and grapple with it, until it opens to me its dread secrets and reveals to me its full meaning and purpose. Now it is coming yet once again to claim my all, and my heart is faint and trembling, and my enduring soul is melting with chaotic rebellion. Would I too could give up the ghost! With your hand in mine, I could for ever lie in blissful sleep; and the dreamy, immortal consciousness wrapt up in our wedded dust will find sweetest pleasure listening to, or being part of, the quivering, throbbing life of inanimate nature. Vance, it seems a horrid mockery only to find you to say a long adieu; only to meet to snatch one hour of parting agony. Poor lisping human language cannot express the mystery of my heart's pain and immortal hunger. Ah! it is good we are not dependent on words. The soul has many languages, and those who only know and understand verbal expression may be said to have none save child-like or ape-like imitation of sound. Love creates language, and the diviner the love the more musical and subtle the creation and sound of language. The true loving soul needs only to see a smile, a hurried glance, the faintest ripple of a half-formed sigh, or to feel the heart beat in the grasp of the hand, to enter into the palace of dreams. What is dreaming? Is

it not the soul's superiority over mere organized matter? Is it not the mysterious *me* existing in intact selfhood, feeling, thinking, experiencing, and growing in knowledge, while its covering of skin, flesh, and muscle is gaining lost power in unconscious repose? The more soul a man or woman has, the more of dreaming or ceaseless activity there will be. I suppose dreaming is thought and feeling disembodied, disporting among the indefinable immensity of ever-evolving life. Vance, I feel as if I must pour out my heart in prayer. What is prayer? Certainly not verbal expression, which seldom ascends so high as the ceiling of the church or chapel. Methinks every holy thought is a prayer; and there are times in every day when the soul is kneeling while the attitude of the body gives no indication of filial devotion. The upturned glance of an earnest soul, and the secret tear of genuine sympathy, wing direct to the heart of the Eternal. There is no prayer in fanaticism or sectarian theology. Only love can pray, and the exhaled life of divine love is a continual prayer. Love is not a faculty or separate power, such as reason, understanding, perception, memory, etc., but the soul itself, life of its life, the mystic relation linking the infinite to the finite in the marvellous affinities of all we know by evolution and onward progression. They who love most have most of God, and know most of His holy attributes of mercy and righteousness. It is by love we enter into the very inner soul of mankind, and know it in all its aggregate of good and evil, joy and sorrow, strength and weakness. Love opens men's hearts and the mystery of all life, and finds its way with favour and acceptance into the very heart of Him who taketh up the isles as a very little thing. 'Love knows there is in reality no time, only the vast inflowing of eternity. Love is a pulse of God's life which nothing can limit or extinguish. It is the crown of our life, nay, the very life of life; the inner mystic thread which flows out of the great infinite soul of God, and feeds our finity with the bread of immortality. Strange, yearning joy—holy tenderness! All real love is pure, gentle, and sad, and bleeds its life away, and swims with very joy to see its inner self reproduced in the answering reciprocity of another kindred spirit. Ah! love, adorations, completeness! When you visit me, I realize a brief moment of the fulness of life. Vance, if you are taken from me, this wonderful pulse of love will freeze in my chilled heart. When death stills the throbbing of your teeming brain, and sheds a glassy blindness over those lovely eyes, so overpowering in tender pathos, and stops your sympathetic ears to my cries, and silences the voice which is the choicest music I have heard, I will gaze up or out at the Great Author of life with the saddest and most yearning gaze that ever strove to penetrate the mystery of mortal life, and win from its creator a reasonable reason for the soul's subjection to faith. I will gaze and gaze behind the exterior of all this shadow and sham, and struggle to weave continuity, life, and beauty out of the present chaos of weltering misery and splendid discontent. I will gaze and gaze until my silent pleading agony has learned the hidden things only revealed to the pure in heart and earnest in soul. Ah! my beloved, pray for me before you go, that I may have patience to bear severe discipline with the growing capacity of an even-balanced mind. The

education of the soul is even as mysterious and marvellous as its origin and limitless capabilities, and I feel I have learned but one letter of the alphabet of true knowledge.'

'Sweet, dearest Rosa, beautiful human angel, struggling with lonely sorrow to overcome all evil and all ignorance, for many years my life has been one unbroken prayer for you,' Monsieur feebly whispered. 'In yon sweeping planet I will resume the same invocation. There our love will for ever bloom, and every time I thank our God-Father for the gift of life I will enshrine you in holier remembrance, and exalt you to a loftier eminence on the throne of my affection, and my joy will not be complete until our twin spirits are re-united.'

Emotion stemmed further utterance, and when the sinking general somewhat recovered, he begged some brandy and water.

'Are you very ill, darling?' she inquired.

'Only a sharp, cutting pain contracting the action of the heart,' he said with a tender smile; 'or rather, I should say, the contracting of the cords or strings of that important organ is causing a sort of choking, cutting oppression. In short, my love, I feel all our sweet communion is nearly ended. My present feelings tell me my physical system is fast disorganizing, but the wonderful love you so pathetically strove to define is living intact and revelling in the completeness of its joy.'

Rosa only smiled a reply; then she was calm and strong, and Monsieur's head rested on her bosom, and her arms were around him.

'Poor unfortunate France,' he murmured. 'Beloved country, my dying prayer is for thy redemption from all imperial and priest oppression. In righteousness is your hope and salvation. In a free government, free religion, and free trade, you shall find the beautiful gate leading to prosperity and eternal life. When humanity is true to its instincts and aspirations, it is also true to the laws of God written within the conscience. France! I leave my children to your care and protection, and I charge you to waste no more money, energy, and life for the tinsel bubble of military renown and the sensual selfishness of imperial moonshine. Arise, France! and hear the voice of the God-Father in your conscience, and with one prolonged shout say the united voice of the people is the government of the nation. France! hear the dying cry of your murdered sons and fathers, and come forth from the tomb of spiritual and moral darkness, shouting *Vive la République*, and so help to herald in the glorious brotherhood of humanity.'

Monsieur's countenance was shining and radiant with the holy flame of his patriotic enthusiasm. Indeed, so rapt was his soul that every feature was changed and transfigured. His was then the face of an angel, and Rosa felt as if death and decay had been swallowed up of life, and that the mortal had put on immortality.

'There is now no more pain, no more death,' he murmured. 'Beloved Rosa, your lovely smile and tender kisses have annihilated all pain and all suffering; and if this be dying, death is simply more fulness of life. I never seem to have lived until now. Would I could find language to express the completeness of this mysterious joy! Rosa, best and holiest love, raise my head a little, that I may once more feast

my mortal eyes with a last lingering look of your matchless beauty. Ah! poor dear child of suffering and sympathy, I am too heavy a weight on your quivering bosom. Clasp me firm, O sweet, blessed love! This is rest; sweet, indefinable transport, rest, and holy calm. Hold me still more firmly, for I am receding away into an infinite ocean of enchanting beauty, and would fain pull you with me. Rosa, how beautiful you look! Only one kiss more. My eyes are a little dim, and some things seem losing shape, but in this solemn hour of short separation I am waking up to find life still more grand and glorious.'

Rosa restrained the rising sobs, crushed down the up-welling tide of sorrow, and with a wistful smile kissed the trembling lips of the dying warrior. She loved him so much, and felt the anguish of separation to be so intensely painful, that she fancied her depth of self-sacrificing love would reanimate his fainting energies, and beat back the chilling approach of dissolution. While she kissed him, sweet endearing words dropped from her lips, and with strained ears and sinking heart she waited to hear his answering replies. Soon, however, her lone heart stood still, frozen with the chill of a strange silence, and she fancied she heard the mystic fluttering of some retreating spirit. 'Vance dearest,' she whispered, 'I have kissed you many times; Vance, why don't you speak? What, O my soul, is this eternal hush? Beloved, your eyes are looking into mine, but the love, the life, is all gone. O awful, mocking silence! where is the life, the divine enthusiasm, the infinitude of beneficent love so lately mine? Dear heaven! I am alone. Pity me, great Being, whose power I see in all creation, for grief and hungry bereaved love have broken my heart. Vance, I loved you better than life! Mute, pale lips, speak to me and say thou art yet clothed with intact individuality, for without thee I am but an animated corpse, crystallized in an open tomb!'

Like the ascending aroma of June flowers, Monsieur glided away, and was ushered into new-born life with Rosa's loving kisses clinging to his emancipated spirit. To him the change was infinite gain, but she, the pure and good, was alone, like a lone star of peace and purity, amid the din and confusion of war,—alone amid scenes of rapine and murder, with the moans and groans of the wounded beating a mocking requiem to her bereaved love. Again and again she kissed his still, cold lips, and what she then felt and realized no earthly language can express. Her grief was as silent as deep. Not a sob quivered in her lone, stricken heart as she bent, tearless and mute, over the marble-like form of her departed lover. By and by a hand was laid on her shoulder, and passively she allowed a sister to lead her away. Once inside her little room, she begged to be left alone, and clasping her small white hands she said, 'Dear, holy Father! Thy fatherhood is more awfully wondrous than all Thy infinite immensity of worlds. I know Thou hast taken my beloved home. Out of his torn body, shot and cut by the fiendish cruelty of human ignorance, Thou hast, in mercy, called him to see and enjoy more of Thyself; and feeling we who are left must finish the work of the departed, I continue darling Vance's expiring prayer. Yet it seems so strange and hard. It may be weak, but I long to die; but in mocking cruelty death is retreating from me, and a long, dreary life

is opening before me. It is hard living when love is lost, and the fire of genius and the pathos of enthusiasm quenched by a great overmastering grief. It is difficult finding a motive for exertion when one after another of our loved ones vanish into the mysterious silences of the unseen, and when unjust governments and a moneyed minority spread misery and anguish on every side. If the lessons of this lower life be difficult, mystical, and mournful, Thou, great Spirit, who alone can divide the light from the darkness, who alone knoweth to what all this seeming confusion is tending, must strengthen me and once more teach me wisdom and understanding, so that I be not overcome by the rapids of human weakness. Beloved Vance has confided his dear children to my care and keeping, and I must live, love, and labour on. How to begin I do not know, for I am old in experience, and seem ripe for the grave. With Vance my beautiful life and mission is ended, yet I must anoint my head with oil, wash my feet, and again live, love, and work: Another life—the widow-mother life, the unmarried widowhood—is mine, and I would fain be noble and enduring; only those blinding tears, these hollow, painful sighs, the rending sobs, and this black sense of utter desolation make me feel like a poor moth consumed by the awful mystery of human suffering. Good, wise Spirit, flow into my weakness and ignorance, and reanimate me with Thine own strength, so that I may ever rise up nearer to Thee. Author of all life, on bended knee, and with aching soul, I anew offer Monsieur's dying prayer, rendered doubly sacred and solemn by the pathos of death and mystery of his new-born immortality, and earnestly cry to Thee to raise up leaders, teachers, preachers, philanthropists, and great-souled writers, to educate and guide this nation into the paths of righteousness and peace.'





CHAPTER LIII.

THE CARRIER-PIGEON.

ROSA had just whispered or rather sobbed her low, earnest prayer, and was preparing to return to the scene of death to see after the shrouding of her beloved, when the same sister tapped gently at her door, and entering, brought with her a beautiful carrier-pigeon.

'Ah!' Rosa exclaimed, 'already my prayers are being answered. This I can see is a message from the besieged city. Dear sister Annie, this wonderful creature's message already calls me from the solitude of repining sorrow to the pressure of active duty.'

'I am indeed glad to know you have got much to live for,' her friend replied. 'You are so noble and good, heaven will not allow you to sink under any pressure of pain or bereavement. Earth, with its burdens of sin and misery, sorely needs such as you. Monsieur is with the company who have fought and overcome death and all evil, but his children are in a city of famine, besieged by cruel oppression, and sitting with thousands more, with their cunning brains paralyzed and their hearts chilled by the horror of murder and starvation. Be brave, therefore, dear Rosa, for your work is not yet done, and the deepest and truest sorrow is active zeal for the salvation of others. Rosa, they love best who work hardest. Woman's mission is not merely to weep oceans of tears over injury and oppression, but to teach nations to turn their swords and monster fire-arms into implements of industry, and learn to settle their disputes, like the gods, by reason, deliberation, and common sense.'

Rosa kissed her dear companion, and the simple, touching pathos of the message made tears run from both their eyes.

'Dearest, best-beloved father,' the child-letter began, 'the beautiful pigeon came all right with your thrice-blessed and welcome message. This dear bird is a very angel from heaven. God must have specially directed it. Now we are so cheerful and hopeful, that we can believe in all the fine stories you told us about, how God cares for everything, and watches over all His children. Papa dear, when little gentle doves, with not half our sense, can fly in that wonderful way through the air, it will not be difficult for us when we get out of our heavy bodies to fly right on to where all the happy angels are. Robert says he knows every inch of the way right on to Planet X, and that going there

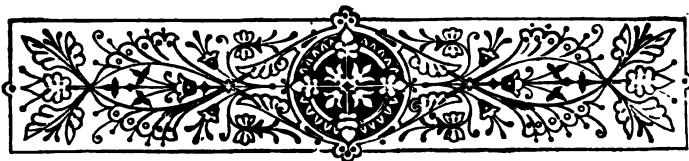
will just be like swimming in a sweet, clear lake. Ten times ten thousand thanks for this dear message. We have kissed it over and over, and sung holy songs to God for keeping you from death. You say you are only slightly wounded, but I am afraid you have made very light of your condition. You were always so self-forgetting, and your interest in our unfortunate country is only one of many evidences you have given of your greatness of soul. I do not think there is another man on earth half so noble and good as my dear papa. When this horrid war is over, the people will make you president of a republic which will save France. In the Bible, God told the people they did wrong in seeking a king, and Mrs. Sidney says kings and emperors are national curses. I have petted and kissed this angel-pigeon until it seems perfectly pleased, and it looks as if it was impatient for my message to get away on its mission of mercy. How wicked and cruel it is to take the life of any beast or fowl, when this pretty dove can be of such service! I think every one should live on the pure fruits of the earth, and try and find out the highest uses of all the animals. Mrs. Sidney says animals have souls as well as us, and that our cruelty to them is but another evidence of the depravity of our nature.

‘Before the blessed messenger arrived, we were nearly mad with suspense. It is awful to be miserable. I never knew human beings could be so miserable, and suffer so much. We were so desperate we had no tears, and our heads were giddy and burning with a confused pain. However, the moment the dear message came we grew all right. We just go up and down like a weather-glass. One hour we catch at hope, and a watery smile plays on our pinched faces; the next we are wringing our hands and babbling like despairing maniacs. It is such a relief to know you are alive, that we have washed, dressed, and taken dinner in a sort of civilized fashion. In the midst of it all, however, I have a chilling fear that you have not told us half the truth. What if you are mortally wounded? Ah! this torture of suspense is murdering. Robert had a strange dream, and nothing will remove from his mind the foreboding that you are dying. You know he has always been a strange, prophetic boy. His early interest in his father’s spiritual science has made him entirely unlike all boys I ever met. I think he has eyes we cannot see; for he says you are lying ebbing out your mortal life with a great bleeding wound in your side. He saw you praying for us and beloved France; and then an angel came and took you away out of your torn body, and the angel and you swam away to Planet X. I tell him dreams are always the opposite of what is to happen, but he only shakes his grave head and kisses me; and I tell him I will not have his kisses unless he dreams better dreams, and that I feel confident God will watch over you and bring you safe home.

‘You wished a correct report of our surroundings, and I can only say it is impossible to give anything like a true report. Language cannot describe scenes such as this. It is simply dreadful. Surely hell cannot be half so horrible! On every side there is starvation and every conceivable form of suffering. Where now is the pomp and splendour of Paris? In a day all its joy and honour have passed away. Wealthy people willingly give away costly jewels for a small morsel of food to

quench the craving of hunger, and the poor hang half a day (like lean, hungry dogs) for one morsel to keep them alive. The masses are so desperate and reckless that they are jesting and drinking beside the dying, and so lost to all decency that the dead remain unburied, a prey to the few remaining starving dogs and cats. These poor animals, once termed poisonous and unfit for human food, are now precious nourishment for men and women. Thus you will see that this city is a maddened mass of horrible misery. O papa, war is fiendish work; we are simply cannibals preying on one another, and the dogs and cats that supper on a human corpse are killed in the morning, and dressed and on the table for a mince pie for dinner. Our store is now very limited, and if this continues, in a short time we, too, will be among the starving. Daily hundreds of tender children, delicate and aged men and women, faint and die under the pressure of these sorrows. The light, too, of the city is running out, and after four in the afternoon we have only the glare of the fire. With such a glimmering ray we cannot see to read, and sit nursing all manner of miserable thoughts. No friend comes in; no morning or evening walk can be enjoyed; we see and hear nothing but rabble, riot, and horrid sounds of bursting shell and maddening yells of the tortured victims as these fly to a corner to bleed to death. O papa, was it for this angels sang when God made the world and man? Only the historian who has seen all this can tell how beautiful Paris, by the grasping greed and mock heroics of two crowned monsters, is buried alive in a horrid hell, shut up in darkness and starvation, and gone mad with the hot pressure of sorrow and suffering. Robert and I get so excited, that we, too, are insane, and say there is no good God, only some great devil. Then Mrs. Sidney, with her superior wisdom, comes to soothe and instruct us. She says God cannot force men to be righteous and good, and that the people alone can prevent war. Not till I am safe in your arms will I believe I am in a God world. Thus you will see your poor Daisy is gone mad with the horror of a war which has broken her heart, wounded her beloved father, and hidden God from her sight. Mrs. Sidney and Robert wish to know if you have seen or heard of Miss Anderson. We know she left England to go to the seat of war as a sister of mercy. I have heard you and Robert speak of her with such a pathos in your voices that I fancy she must be like loving Jesus, who went about doing good. If we only knew if she was with you, all would be well. In your next, don't forget to say if you have heard of her, and don't forget to kiss the blessed pigeon, for it bears on its plumage many kisses and tears from your heart-broken Daisy. Now, best, dearest, noblest father, may God still keep you in safety; may He restore you and send you soon to your poor caged Daisy. Robert and Mrs. Sidney join me in all my prayers and love. Oh how I long to see your dear face, to hear your soft, rich voice, and feel your arms around me! I shall try to be, as you said, a true warrior's daughter; but I fear you will think this tearful scribble weak childish complaining. Forgive me, papa, for not being more heroic, and with much anxious love and many kisses, I am ever your loving but sorrowing

‘DAISY.’



CHAPTER LIV.

'LET THE DEAD BURY THEIR DEAD, FOLLOW THOU ME.'

DAISY'S simple, touching letter, written so close and small on tissue paper, went to Rosa's heart as nothing else could, and sooner than she expected she was thrilling and throbbing with tender sympathy for the orphan daughter of her dead lover. The truth is, Rosa's divine grief could only find relief in noble action. Like the Divine Founder of Christianity, she took up the heaviest cross, ever following after duty, even if it led to suffering and death. Anything and everything she could endure, so be she kept her soul unspotted by evil, and could in any way lessen the evils which hang like incubuses on every nation and race. From that hour she loved Daisy as deeply, tenderly, and truly as if she had been her own daughter. Blessed child of unfortunate Agatha and Vance, how could she but yearn over her! The living, loving soul breathing in every word of the tearful, yearning letter, told her Daisy was, indeed, a second volume of such loving and unfortunate parents. All through in Rosa's life events follow quick and fast. No sooner is one object of love and care removed, than some other, equally dependent, is thrust upon her sympathy, and in no case has she ever turned aside to whine over misfortune or nurse a selfish sorrow.

'Dear sister,' she said, 'I think my life is all romance through and through. Strange that even before I have darling Vance dressed in the imposing garb of the grave, that this carrier-pigeon should bring me a pearl of great price, a lovely petal of rarest beauty, a fair, lone orphan, crying like a lost child in the din and maddening horror of a besieged city. I am a great reader of romance; for I think a beautiful tale of human life the very best medium of instruction. Yet in all fiction I have not found anything half so romantic as my own single life of sorrow and suffering. However, human life is many-sided, and the light airy pictures, as well as the horrid cruelty and uncleanness of some novelists, may be as real as my more earnest struggle after the divine and eternal.'

'From what you have told me,' her friend replied, 'yours has indeed been a romantic life of noble endeavour to show how it is the Christ-life alone which can save the world. That is self-renunciation. If you have lost the bodily presence of the man you loved better than life, you have found the orphan boy of the aged astronomer, as well as a

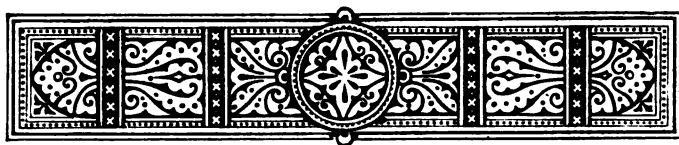
daughter in Monsieur's only child. These must, dear Rosa, draw you back to earth, and make you anew determine to be noble at all risks.'

With these words the sister left her to prepare a message for the winged carrier, and when again alone, she faltered, 'Whatever life may be to others, to me it is all through earnest work. Even now I have no time for indulging in the luxury of sentimental sorrow. Like Jesus of old, I must leave the dead to bury the dead, and follow after righteousness in saving and redeeming those who remain. Now Vance is happy with Agatha, his earthly work is done, and he has entered on a fuller life. His children are left to me, and I must yet more and more sanctify myself by cheerfully working the works of Him who gave me life.'

Feeding, kissing, and stroking the arching neck of the beautiful pigeon, she considered it truest kindness to hide the real truth for a time. In spirit, however, the message was true, if misleading: 'The father of Daisy, the brave warrior, was doing well; and she, Miss Anderson, was beside him.' Fastening these few simple words to the feet of the winged messenger, she felt (if her heart was breaking, and sobs almost choking her) that Daisy and Robert would experience a short relief. It would not be half so hard to tell them the real truth when she was beside them; and in a besieged city, surrounded by cruelty and starvation, they required no new addition to their hot pressure of misery. For a time she watched the curving flight of the dove as it sped over the bloody, down-trodden fields of war. By what mysterious instinct it could thus enter into human needs, she knew not. One thing, it seemed in intensest sympathy with its mission, and fled direct toward the miserable city.

Returning to the solemn mystery and majesty of death, she finished the shrouding of Monsieur with her own hands. She knew his witnessing spirit would like her to do many little offices to his earthly remains, and she was never weary laying fresh flowers on his breast, and anointing his face with choicest perfume. Lovely, sublimely lovely, she appeared. Then the haloing glory of sacrifice and meek endurance made her countenance shine with indefinable beauty. Monsieur, too, was grandly beautiful. The smile of calm victory, and the radiance of hopeful blessedness, had so sublimated and chiselled every feature, that art had only to bow in silent wonder, confessing that its grandest achievements are but tame imitations of the work of the Divine Artist. If this be death, none need fear to die. Truly of the French general we may say, 'After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well.'





CHAPTER LV.

HE IS LAID TO REST.

WE leave our dead in the silent bosom of fragrant earth, and even our material remains know nothing of death, but live on in the greenness of each succeeding spring, in the beauty and sweetness of summer's bloom, and the golden glory of autumn fruitfulness. Even in winter the richness of our mouldering dust keeps warm and feeds the germs of mother-earth; and in mankind there is no death, but only life, and life more fully—life in perennial matter, in corporate immortality, in the continuity of noble work, and, still more wonderful, life in never-ending intactness of individual glory.

It might have been a day, a week, a month, or a year, so completely unconscious was Rosa of the life which is measured by figures on a dial, or the revolutions of day and night. From the time Monsieur's spirit fled from his torn, spent body, she had grown aged and bent. All her life, but more especially now, she lived by deeds, by too sensitive heart-beats, and thrilling, throbbing vibrations of a brain ever busy thinking out some of God's thoughts after Him. Now, however, something called her out of her inner world of reflection. She had been moving amid the suffering and sickening horrors of the ambulance like one in a dream, but the first mournful sounds of 'Saul's Dead March' made her start, and come back from a far-off land, and take an intelligent part in the saddest of all ceremonies. She was dressed in plain mourning, and the chief object of interest in the solemn procession of officers and sisters of mercy, who with bent heads and sorrowing hearts accompanied the remains of the noble warrior to its final resting-place. In her hand was a palm of evergreen, and white perennials of richest bloom. The service was as simple as imposing; and when the man of God, with touching pathos, read the inspired words, sobs and tears shook every bosom, and made them feel life must be as earnest and divine as its mortal ending is tragical and mournful. The infinite dome of space was the temple, and the incense of near deity seemed wafted on every breeze, and the small group of mourners felt they were indeed standing on holy ground. General Chand was a great favourite. He was as humble and meek as brave and heroic, and

great sobs rent the bosoms of strong men, and his fellow-officers mourned for him as for a loved parent, and refused to be comforted.

Rosa had no tears, no sobs ; but the manifestation of so much genuine sorrow soothed and satisfied her aching heart. She had kissed Monsieur's spirit as it fled from earth, and now she as tenderly lowered his head into its narrow bed. It was a fearful ordeal, and when the first handful of earth rattled on the coffin lid, she dropped her last white perennial, and would have reeled and fallen into the new-made grave had it not been that a brother caught her in his arms. It was but a passing spasm, for she neither fainted nor uttered the least complaint. A short prayer was again offered, another hymn sung ; and when the band struck up a more cheering tune, Rosa turned from the grave a moving corpse. In the tomb of the French general her soul, her all of love, lay shrouded, waiting for the time when God will say her work here is done, and call her to re-union in a more enduring state of life.





CHAPTER LVI.

'GATHER UP THE FRAGMENTS THAT NOTHING BE LOST.'

IN all nature there is no waste, simply the reciprocal exchange of life and life conditions. In all true human life there is in reality no such a thing as defeat. Even the death of the body is increase of life to the spirit, and all scientific research, as well as increase of material gain, which in any way deadens or depraves the finest instincts of our nature, or in any way takes from the generosity of the divine law of righteousness (enrolled in the very centre of nature), is at once a sin against God and all the highest laws of our well-being. Thus the knowledge which is not based on mercy and truth is the only failure which leaves no fragments worth gathering up. The fragments, however, of all noble work go to the laying of the foundation of a yet more glorious edifice. If the hand of one master-builder is deprived of cunning, another, with a lamp new trimmed and with a more complete revelation, enters into the unfinished work, and pushes the plan of human redemption a mile nearer completion.

All war is a mistake, a blunder, and a heinous sin. However much some selfish statesmen may rave of its value as a fine art, educating and drawing out the wider sympathies of the people, we have no hesitation in stigmatizing it as a barbarous iniquity, hateful in the sight of God, and entirely destitute of any of the higher excellences and utilities of an educating science.

Again time has fled, and the sorrows and sufferings of the besieged city are things of the past. Brilliant Paris has again restored her gilded galleries, her statues and pictures, and commenced a career of greater glory and prosperity; and the republican government Monsieur so earnestly prayed for is an accomplished fact in the history of that eventful nation. It may be the sword will yet cut through rankling jealousies and selfish ambition; for republican government, like all other forms of justice, only reach perfection through suffering and sorrow. Perhaps some president must be a martyr to the clamour of the ignorant and fanatical before that ingenious race learn the secret of wisdom. Meantime we can only wish the new political order all success, and trust it may steadily progress in all wisdom and moderation—the pioneer of liberty and righteousness, of free trade and fair play, giving to all sects

the freedom of conscience to worship the God which seems to him and her most holy and divine. No nation will ever lose its position so long as it learns by failure to be more wise and noble ; and it may not be too much to hope that the French republic will be far too noble and enlightened for nursing resentment, or ever again dreaming of the tinsel renown of military moonshine, but rather be the first to insist on an international republic for the settling of all disputes arising between the various rulers of the different races of mankind.

Rosa and her two adopted children had returned to Scotland, and settled down in the beautiful suburbs of Modern Athens. In that ancient city, so picturesque for situation, and so famed for its love of art and education, and also so characterized by a grinning background of refined vice, flippant scepticism, weltering, squalid drunkenness, and chronic poverty, she found ample outlets for all her philanthropic enthusiasm. Believing all disease and every other evil can be swept away, anew she turned the whole weight of her matured experience in behalf of remedial measures for raising the masses, so that improvidence, drunkenness, and pauperism might be for ever banished from our borders. In the ranks of literature she has always occupied a foremost place ; and while many stand aghast at her theological opinions, even the most fanatical and exclusive reverence her great love and enthusiasm for the emancipation of all nations and races from every form of evil and error. One of her chief pleasures was the superintending of the education of Robert and Daisy. Loving them, and bathing in their fresh, full love, she seemed to begin life anew ; and the bounding peals of their youthful mirthfulness made her home a scene of vocal delight. Both of them were gifted with rare natural abilities ; and to them she was as God, wisely and gently leading them by the paths of eternal life. With their young lives blending in mystic love, and growing in fresh beauty by her side, she knew nothing of gloom or weariness, but joyfully went from one degree of womanly excellence to another. Their lives were holy and complete, and their home an enchanting shrine, overlaid with art and imposing with the elegance and comfort of unassuming plenty. Managed and supported by their own means and love, they have a 'Daisy Home' for destitute boys and girls ; but no one knew from their dress or the management of the house that they were charity boys and girls. Rosa's waifs needed no watching officers or monitors. If they go out no one follows them, and love makes them speedily return to the ark of rest. Thus with Rosa and her children each day fled like a moment of enchanting bliss, and night was a more mystic vision in which they beheld the smiling faces of the departed, and roamed in spirit among the more resplendent life of Planet X.

The Moray divorce case had likewise become an event of history, and Lady Augusta's life was completed when she became the wedded wife of Captain Geddes. Far from the worry and vain strife of fashionable life, among the picturesque beauty of Switzerland, among its rich flowers and magnificent mountains, and lakes clear and blue as the dome of space, they enjoy a paradise of mutual endearment. A beautiful son and daughter complete their home happiness, and Lady Augusta atones for the errors of her early youth by relieving poverty and distress.

To hungry children and outcast women she is merciful and kind, as Jesus and His religion and love is the rule of her life.

Lord Moray could not induce Mrs. Sidney to divorce herself from the memory of her departed husband and her work for humanity, and he found, like all vain, selfish men, balm for his wounded pride in courting and winning a simple but beautiful parson's daughter in Wales. In early maidenhood, before she had discovered the great gifts heaven had bestowed, Mrs. Sidney gave to the reckless young noble her first harvest of maiden love. Now, however, she learned the true meaning of life, and the divine mission of love, her soul craved for companionship with nothing short of kindred reciprocity. In France she had finally taken up her abode. The tastes, manners, and ingenuity of that wonderful people had peculiar charms for her passionate genius, and she had got established almost as a second Madame de Staël; and her opinions and writings were powerful influences in moulding and educating the new republic. Now she is engaged preparing a work principally dealing with the relations of Church and State. It appears to her that a correct understanding of the relative positions and duties of the church and politics is the cardinal problem of the future of France. Personally she has very little reverence for Popery—in fact, considers all complex ecclesiastical systems more or less gigantic evils shrouding the pure native instincts of holy aspiration with superstition. Nevertheless, she insists on absolute freedom alike to Romanist and atheist; for the liberty and enlightenment which seeks to oppress or persecute a less advanced section of adherents is but a more educated form of bigotry and intolerance. The Church must have its own liberty; and only when it seeks to influence or corrupt the political legislation can the latter be justified in any way interfering with the religious ritual and confessional of the human conscience.

In one of her unpublished mss. we find the following letter to a British statesman:—

‘Dear Sir,—You ask for some light in regard to my idea of the present transition state of France, and I briefly say I would not by voice or pen in any way stir up a feeling of active hostility between the Church and the Government. It appears to me a little more calm moderation on both sides would get over the first of the difficulties, and wise reflection and liberal toleration will by and by elucidate the power and legitimate place and mission of each. The liberty or enlightenment which oppresses or in any way persecutes that which it has ceased to believe in, is but another form of intolerance. Seeing that Church and State are but both growing branches of social science, we must leave to the unfolding of the human intellect and the more educated and enlightened authority of the human conscience the umpire power to assign to each its proper place and work. It appears to me that France as a nation is simply beginning to cast off the horrid benumbing nightmare of the past, just beginning to realize her indigenous greatness, and that France has been too long, at least with strangers, confounded with Paris, and the vain, reckless ambition and adventure of her monarchical rulers. It may seem strange, yet, to a great extent, France is a mystery to herself; and not until every corner of her vast extent is actively and

intelligently alive to her responsibility and mission as a centre of civilization, can we estimate the infinitude of her position and future influence on the history of the world. We with British blood and ideas in our brains are too apt to forget that France is a wide fertile country—in fact, so large and completely different from our crowded island, that we must magnify our conception of physical distance before we can form anything like a just estimate or idea of its resources and latent powers of wealth and industry, and its means of turning its ingenuity and thrift, as well as its art and enthusiasm, to rich advantage. The truth is, the richness and abundance of its resources also tell of deep wants unsupplied, of mental, moral, and physical capital slumbering for the inspiration of higher life and diviner motives. It is, indeed, a long fertile distance from the Channel to the Mediterranean, and from the Bay of Biscay to the Rhine. Therefore, there is the more urgent need for local institutions to rouse up the dormant intellect and educate the sluggish industry of the wide outlying districts in wise self-government and reliance on the authority of the human soul to attain to all that is purest and best, and to have for ever done with the oppressive greed, barbarous injustice, and cruel caprice of crowned mountebanks. The very facts that France is such a large continent, and peopled with such an enthusiastic, ingenious race, and to the width of its domains adds a richness of soil and salubrity of atmosphere which tends to physical perfection, are evidences and earnestings that the people have simply to awake from their moral and mental trance to begin a glorious march of endless prosperity.’

Major Wray has retired from active service, and is spending the autumn of his days in pious meditation and mental research in one of the most picturesque districts of the north of Scotland. His Tory pride and prejudices have all vanished like a forgotten dream, and even his youthful follies and immoralities are only remembered as bitter lessons, enabling him more clearly to see and more deeply to venerate the excellences of virtue and goodness. He is still very handsome; and when entirely free from the sullen, moody discontent which embittered the best part of his days, he is full of winning attractions and a fertile source of enjoyment. Once the vein is opened, he is a fluent conversationalist, full of anecdote and racy humour, and although rather rash and hasty in conclusion, is in spirit and heart charitable and tolerant. He is still the admiring friend and privileged correspondent of Rosa; and was she ever likely to change her name, he would most gladly become her connubial partner. Her every wish and will is his law; and if she feel it better to remain single, he has learned to accept the disappointments of life with Christian resignation. Once he found a delusive charm in strong drink to soothe all his disappointment and vain moping over lost opportunities. Now, however, some noble duty, some soul-elevating study, lends the necessary stimulant to healthy exertion, and truly his last days are better than the first. Often, often he thanks the Divine Author of all good for Rosa’s friendship and influence; and as he serenely enjoys the remainder of his earthly days, he is ripening in preparation for more perennial life to come. One in thought and feeling, Rosa’s tender sympathy is ever a sweet entwining power, ever an endearing source of joy, which no time can change, and

the sweetness and faithfulness of which shall be a strengthening aroma in the hour of death.

Our noble friend Martin Dawson is perfectly restored. His sojourn in foreign lands established his physical health and has given enlarged scope to his mind. More than ever his teeming brain is full of literary undertakings. The truth is, there is hardly a conceivable height or depth of thought and feeling into which he has not plunged; and like all who ever soar nearer God in purity of life and correctness of wisdom, he ever returns to his desk with richer trophies for the enriching and enlightening of the people. His is a rugged, earnest gospel of work, and evermore work out salvation from all evil. Few if any can so analyze the subtle manifestations of mind, or lay bare with such graphic minuteness the more mysterious waywardness of the human heart in its strivings with pride, principle, and lustful passion. In all his master works, in some form or other, he idolizes Rosa as the inspirer of his holiest feelings, and as the angelic pioneer of his most sublime conceptions.

Yet again the swift wheels of time have been speeding. Robert Anton, the young astronomer, has grown into a handsome man with classic features, all lit up with the indescribable beauty of purity and intelligence. The weeping, lonely orphan has grown into a noble young man, with a brain all on fire with the dream of fame and enthusiasm for humanity. To astronomy he is wedded heart and soul, and only lives to search after and find out the wisdom and excellence of absolute greatness coiled up and manifested in the immensity of beautiful order and complex reciprocity of the myriad systems and worlds sweeping through the dome of space. Life to the young astronomer is now one silver peal of mystic blessedness. The wonderful discoveries of his science enable him to realize as few can that there is no curse of death, or God-imposed curses of suffering; and that as mankind more and more grow toward the man and womanhood of their nature, the laws of healthful life will be better understood, and obedience to these laws will be increase of joy and blessedness. Now he realizes and speaks of Planet X as the generality of mankind do of a foreign country. To him God is no mere abstraction or great inconceivable Force, but a real, abiding friend, infinitely holy and as infinitely loving and merciful; and while life, as beginning and centering in God, is a mystery which recedes farther back the more he attempts to catch the mystic thread, he is content with studying and arriving at intelligent conclusions of life as manifested in the huge planets which sweep in space, and the minuter manifestations of life in all their beauty and glory lying around on every side of his journey through earth. In short, Robert Anton is one of the most promising and reverent scientists of our times, and the germs of his beautiful mind are gradually unfolding their latent powers by farther and farther searching into the treasury of his favourite science, and in enriching the minds of the less studious and searching with elaborate essays on his discoveries. What can compare with the beauty and mystic interest of the gradual and steady progression or unfolding of

an individual mind, or the glory of the enthusiasm of a great soul wedded to a noble purpose? As we watch the wonderful unfolding, we are now silenced with holy awe, witnessing the great volcanic eruptions of unshapen thoughts bursting from the heated centre of grasping apprehension, as the mind throbs with mystic wonder as it scales the ethereal peaks of God's infinite thought, catching some faint outlines of His absolute conceptions; again we are lulled into enchanting repose viewing the transfiguration ecstasy of holy contemplation; then we gaze with fixed admiration, half of fear, half of awe, as the growing experiences of real life-work act and react on the devout student, sweeping over the sensitive soul the varying emotions of joy and sorrow, at one time launching the sympathetic heart into roaring cataracts of bewildering suffering, and at another bathing the spirit in a very heaven of delight; and yet once more, we listen with thrilling exaltation to the echo of pervading deity drawing the rapt spirit into the more blissful seclusion of real communion with its author and God, giving the growing mind an experience whereby it lives ages in one hour of indefinable rapture.

Although Robert Anton is now the favoured son of fortune, the poor are his chosen friends, and to them he is a friend indeed. His first duty as an author was revising and publishing his father's MSS., and then he set in earnest to supplementing these with his own additional discoveries, and more poetic and artistic expression. His greatest honour and deepest joy, however, is in bowing in reverent prostration before the ever-increasing fame of his departed father. When he remembers how he toiled and clung to his beliefs, and honoured his inspiration, how he wrote on amid defeat and opposition, and poverty and failing health, holding on his way like a solitary comet, or the one star in the centre of gross darkness and cruel bigotry, he feels he is not worthy to stoop down and kiss the outer garment of such a parent.

Beautiful Daisy shares in his wealth of intellect, and only views God and truth through his noble love and the enlightenment of his lofty science. His college hours are the only weary ones in her bright, bright day. Not a moment passes without her filling it in with deep, adoring yearnings for his return, and absence is made endurable by her planning and arranging domestic comforts and beautiful surprises for her absent idol. Physically she is very beautiful, and her absorbing passion for the handsome student animates her mind with healthful life, and lights up her flower-like face with an expression of touching pathos. Twin spirits from mere boy and girlhood, Robert and Daisy enjoy a heaven down here, and realize life to be as blissful as mysterious in sublime grandeur. No jealousy, no fear or uneasy misgivings mar the completeness of their blessedness. Confident in each other, they simply live to revel in mutual love, and bless society with sanctified activities for the upraising and educating of all that are ignorant and oppressed. Their love is as pure as passionate, and the mutual growth of two noble souls progressing in all the glory of perennial life. From the first Rosa smiled sweetly on their lovely attachment; but being no advocate of early marriages, she taught them the beauty and greatness of educating inclination into obedience with law, reason, and

wise understanding. Marriage generally brings, as one of its results, parentage and other sacred duties and responsibilities which very young, rapt lovers are but poorly prepared to undertake. Rosa had reflected deeply on these sacred relationships in their various bearings for good or evil alike on the individual and the nation, and had trained the young people to believe and act according to her ideas. According to her mind, the true position of youth is reverent obedience to more matured wisdom, and not in foolishly throwing off all restraint, and walking in the vain imaginings of untutored passion. Robert and Daisy, however, found her yoke love, and in all things they were obedient, and their complete happiness was her constant care. By and by, however, there came a time when she suggested no longer delay, and amid the peal of merry bells, and smiling bridesmaids, and many kind wishes, Robert led beautiful Daisy to the altar. One house still holds them, and with them time speeds like a shining angel, and every rising sun adds new charms to their beautiful progressive lives, and the heaven of the glorified descends into their centre, and with them the family in heaven and earth is one.

Henry Hamilton has married the youngest Miss Clayton, and has found her a loving, intelligent help-meet. By the influence of her father as a leading politician, Hamilton has risen considerably in the military profession. Likewise his own ability, and wise moderation and steady devotion to goodness, tended greatly to secure his promotion. Only one step more and he will be General Hamilton.

Clayton is still a leading Liberal of a most pronounced character, fighting the Opposition right and left, and by voice and pen is striving to educate the masses for supporting and appreciating a righteous government, ever impressing on one and all that the men and women who cannot rule their own passions, and make their own home a spot of beauty and comfort, are unfit for a voice in the intelligent government of a country. Only freemen indeed can fight for and live the beautiful life of liberty. Thus the great-souled man taught, and fought with true heroism and comprehensive grasp of mind for all measures likely to benefit the greatest number, and raise our country in the eyes of other nations as one whose influence and example are worthy of imitation.

The Witch of Sedan has given up her weird, wandering life, and is now a house-dweller of no mean importance. Her mission ended with the fall of Napoleon, and she cast aside her mendicant dress, and became what she really was, a lady of distinction. Napoleon's early cruelties and oppressions had deprived her of a noble husband and two loved sons, who he knew were active democrats. In the agony of bereavement she cursed him and all his descendants, and daily prayed to heaven to remove them root and branch. In the guise of a wandering mendicant she laboured to organize a band of republican politicians, to be ready when the opportunity came to redress the wrongs of the people, and save beautiful France from becoming a heap of imperial oppression and popish sensualism. While thus wandering she had many peculiar opportunities of gaining valuable information in regard to the scheming barbarism and greed of the imperial hoof; and if

molested or hunted down, she assumed to be a spirit from the other world, sent to do God's special work. It was not difficult to terrify superstitious believers in the delusions of Romanism; and afraid in any way to interfere with the Witch of Sedan, as she was called, the mountain prophetess went on her solitary way. After peace was restored she soon cultivated the acquaintance of Mrs. Sidney, and has been of immense value to that gifted woman in furnishing her with true and stirring material for the political work in which she is engaged. Hundreds of touching romances of real life are coiled up in her crowded memory—true, stirring romances, in many of which she took part before the murder of her husband and sons, and others she had learned in her strange wanderings to and fro as a witch and fortune-teller.

It was the spring of 1874, and great political measures confronted a newly-organized Conservative majority, and a large amount of public money lay in the treasury to be put to wise and good purposes. However, a larger amount of social misery and ignorance, and female subjection, cry for redress; and without venturing far into the complications of international politics or foreign policy and adventure, the new Government will find plenty of work as well as outlets for real political genius at home. Some more prophetic Liberals and Radicals are shaking their heads, and venturing to say the nation will regret this last innings of retrogression and blind respect and veneration for tottering traditions and worn-out laws and customs. Some even go so far as to say the money will be spent in mad adventure, and that commercial stagnation and semi-starvation, like horrid skeletons, will soon be stalking through our streets, and that abroad the dying yell of the savage, slain by the white man in the name of God and for the cause of Christianity, will be the spectacle we shall present to wondering nations and weeping angels.

However, we sincerely wish the new-formed Government all success, and trust it will act for the better to all and the worse to none. With the ingoing of the Tory Government our present work draws to a close. If the reader is disappointed that we have neither wedded Rosa to a particular party, to some cosmopolitan church, nor even to a husband,—if she be neither Whig nor Tory, atheist nor materialist, surely it will suffice that her life and unwearied philanthropy are and have been for liberty, religion, and all social beauty, and the upbuilding of the human mind in all excellence. If she has been and still is rather timid and shrinking in regard to her belief in creeds, sacraments, and outward expressions of popular Christianity, she has almost supernatural belief in the existence, and all-perfecting and all-embracing love, of a good God, and the ultimate redemption of all mankind, and of a beautiful earth wherein shall dwell righteousness. If she has small sympathy with the mere pretence of dogmatic science in its affirmations and assumptions, she recognises all unprejudiced scientific discoveries as valuable aids in enlarging and enlightening the mind, and liberalizing the aspirations of the spirit as it traces out the footprints of a reasonable, consistent God, who works by the very laws which are engraven in life and life

manifestations, and has enthroned the human soul as the only infallible authority, and conscience as the high-priest pointing the way to holiness, justice, and truth. And in all her varying experiences she has pillowed her head on the bosom of God, and in her darkest sorrow, and most dismal times of questioning and searching, ever reverently realized Him as the Father of her life and the completer of her faith and hope. The rest she can explain as her life extends; and as her shadow shorteneth, duty is still enlarging and increasing, and labour growing more and more earnest and divine, and life more and more real and sublime. If she be far ahead of the most of us in mental enlightenment and spiritual experience and aspiration, we can all realize her influence as a true, noble woman, stirring our inmost souls, and with gratitude and veneration clasp her as a light in much darkness, as a dear sympathizer and fellow-sufferer, touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and as a safe guide to lead us to our God-Father, and a true monitor, teaching that all through life only by loving sacrifice and heroic, unbending devotion to duty can we become truly wise, great, and good. Most like love stories, and Rosa has been a love tale through and through. Love is life, and knoweth not revenge or any other lustful passion. All the true and beautiful relationships of life are linked and re-linked in love, and duty is the ladder leading right up to the heart of God.

THE END.

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